PROFESSIONAL PHOTOGRAPHER

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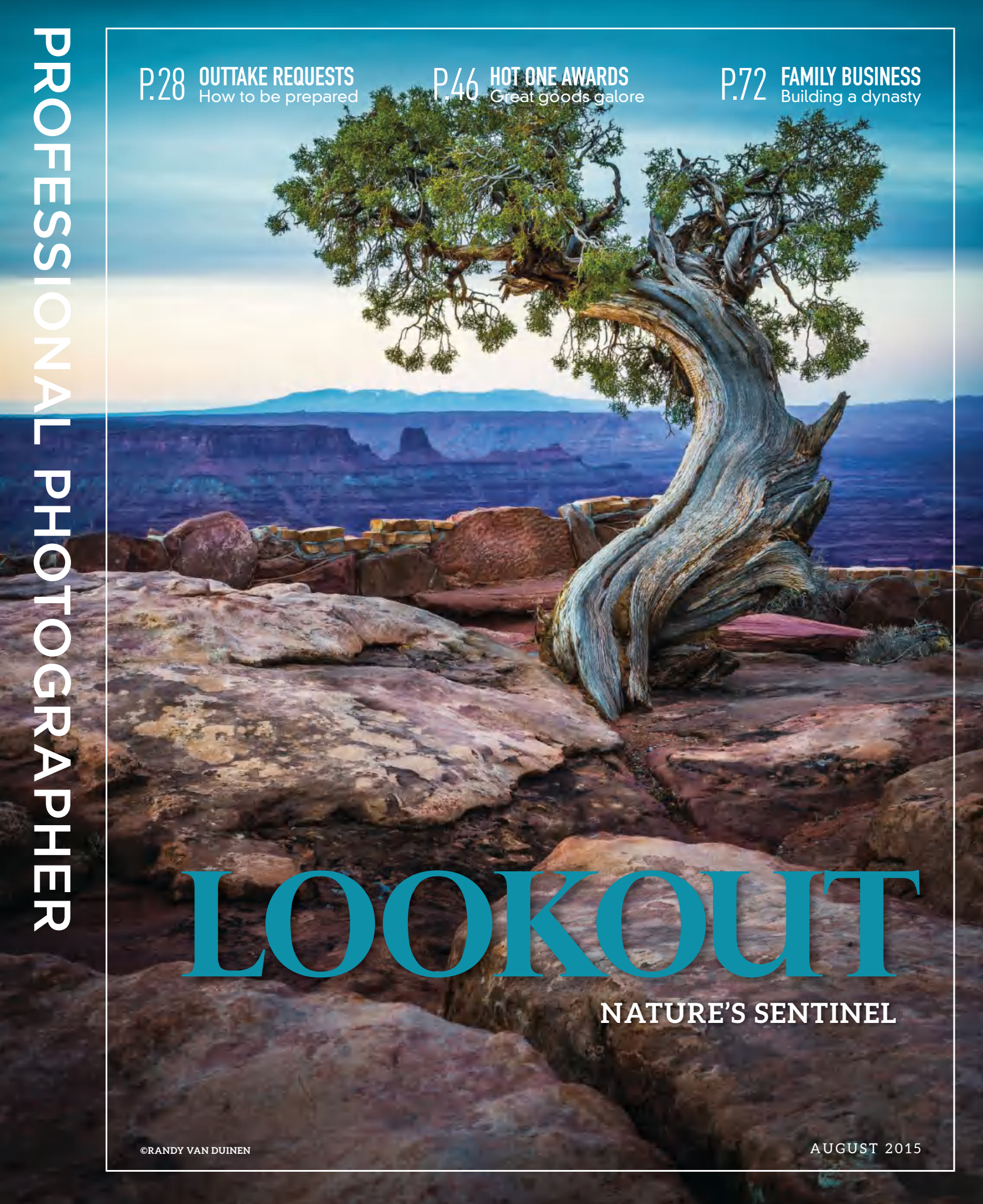
Building a dynasty



LOOKOUT

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Look for the Imaging USA 2016 badge in articles throughout this issue. You'll find insight and inspiration from upcoming convention speakers!

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A PHYSICAL EXPERIENCE

IMMERSED IN THE VIEWING

When you consider the physicality of photography, you may first envision your own movements: hefting equipment at a location, lifting the camera to your eye, walking around your subject, bending, squatting, kneeling. You use your entire body a lot throughout the course of your work. And you probably think about the subject's movements as well: posing an infant, repositioning family members in a group, freezing sports action.

But what about the kinetics of the viewers of your photography? Maybe you've never thought about the ways that someone looking at your work might, literally, be moved.

Maybe you've never thought about the ways that someone looking at your work might, literally, be moved.

In fact, this intriguing notion is one that landscape photographer Clyde Butcher does consider in the course of making his art. Butcher's story is one that will tug at you for many reasons ("Force of Life," p. 63). He's known prosperity and tragedy, artistic uncertainty and creative satisfaction. These days, traipsing through the Everglades with his vintage view camera, he's as experienced as anyone when it comes to the physical demands of being a photographer.

To me, what's as compelling as Butcher's compositions themselves is the thought process behind the final products of his work. He crafts massive silver gelatin prints from his images. Not necessarily because bigger dimensions equal bigger payoff. But mural-size prints require that viewers move their eyes, their head, perhaps their whole body to see the full scope of the image. Just like we do when we're faced with the subjects of his artistic compositions—vast swaths of nature. This is an immersive and full-body experience.

And I can't help but note that Butcher's default presentation format is the silver gelatin print. It's not because he's nostalgic. He's been around the block a few times in his photographic career and has used a vast array of image-capture devices ranging from his vintage Deardorff to his iPhone. But he also knows what people value: archival quality prints that literally turn their heads. •

Jane Gaboury
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FOREGROUND

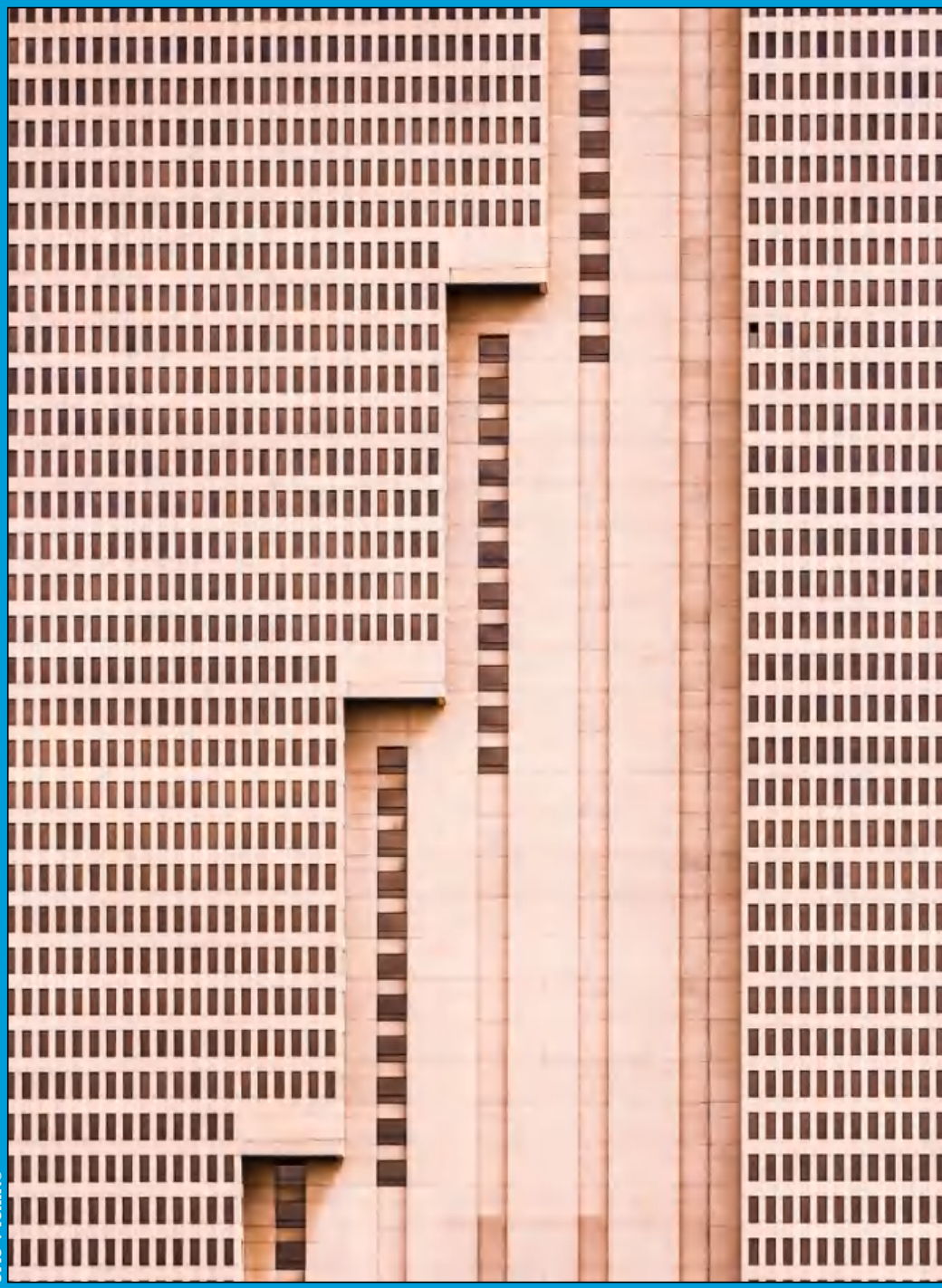
Edited by Amanda Arnold

EDIFICIAL APPEAL

THE IDENTIFYING DETAILS OF AN ICON

This image of the Burnett Plaza in Fort Worth, Texas, was captured by structural photographer Nikola Olic. The building, which Olic describes as "brutal" and "striking," is the tallest in the city, with a concrete façade that contrasts Fort Worth's glossier structures.

Spotting it from the highway, Olic decided to make it the subject of one of his abstract images. He studied Google Maps to pinpoint the best area from which to take his shot. Then he spent two days scouting Fort Worth, lucking out by finding a hill next to a parking lot where he was able to stand on a ledge and record 150 photographs. From that pool of images he selected one that best represents the essence of the building's design—its "structural quote," he says. structurephotography.org



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ENDANGERED DARKNESS

SHEDDING LIGHT ON SKYGLOW

Gavin Heffernan (left) and Harun Mehmedinovic

▶ Cities are consumed by so much light pollution that we forget to look for stars because we see them so infrequently. Photographers Gavin Heffernan and Harun Mehmedinovic want to remind the public what the sky looked like before artificial light washed it out. Through a Kickstarter campaign, they've raised tens of thousands of dollars to fund their Skyglow Project, time-lapse photography work in North America's dark sky locations (skyglowproject.com). They hope to compile the images into a book and complement them with essays that educate readers about light pollution.

INSPIRATION: Heffernan and Mehmedinovic met at the American Film Institute in Los Angeles and began doing time-lapse projects together as a creative outlet and to connect with nature. Their image making would take two to three hours to complete, which left them plenty of time to discuss how difficult it is to find areas with visible stars. "We decided to do a project that not only would shine some light on this issue but allow us to go to the amazing places that we have not yet had a chance to see—the dark sky locations in North America," Heffernan says.

PREPARATION: Astro time-lapse photography requires a very fast lens—usually f/2.8

IMAGES ©GAVIN HEFFERNAN AND HARUN MEHMEDINOVIC

or wider—and 25-second exposures, with an ISO between 2500 and 6400. The duo uses Canon EOS 5D Mark III cameras and often must hike to remote areas to find dark sky. "We are leaving the camera in the middle of nowhere for hours," Mehmedinovic says. "You use a lot of batteries."

LOCATION: The International Dark-Sky Association has identified areas it dubs dark sky towns, or light pollution-free zones. National parks also are often skyglow-free. "Death Valley is an incredible dark sky area," Heffernan says.

ILLUMINATION: Heffernan and Mehmedinovic have also photographed cities at night and have superimposed the starry skies from their dark sky images onto the black sky in their city images, thus revealing what the world might look like if the Milky Way weren't obliterated by artificial light. "More and more people are not seeing the Milky Way in their lifetime, and all of the sudden it becomes more exotic that we are putting it out there," Heffernan says. •

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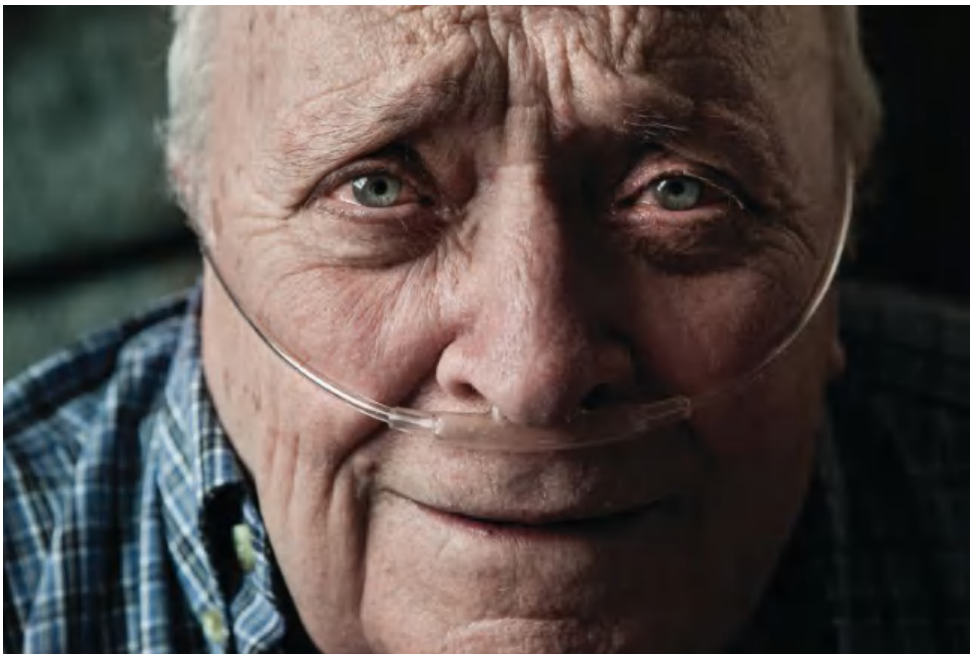


IMAGES ©RANDY BACON

> *"My mantra is, There are 7 billion people in the world, and each and every one of them is a unique work of art."*

▸ Portrait photographer Randy Bacon launched his 7 Billion Ones website in April. But the idea to create the website, which features the portraits and stories of everyday people facing adversity, has been brewing for a long time.

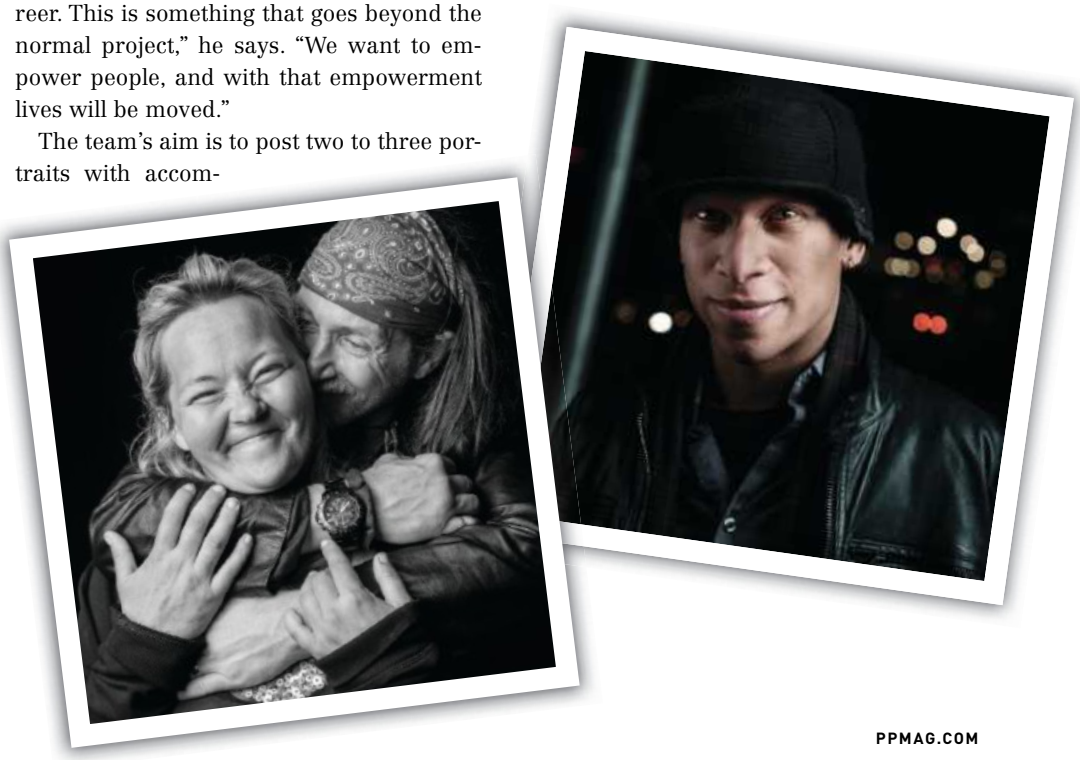
"For years and years my whole approach with photography has been trying to show the unique qualities of people and through their portraits to connect with the idea that we are each one of a kind and we each matter and that we have these stories that not only affect our personal lives but the lives of others," Bacon says. "A year or two ago, I felt like I needed to ramp up this idea, to follow the passion and artistic drive within me to reach a wider audience with this message." So he got to work on a business plan, brainstormed a name, and launched a website (7billionones.org) and social media strategy.

The commonality among 7 Billion Ones subjects? "They've risen above a challenge and thus are living inspirations of the strength of hope," says Bacon, who's made portraits of a teenage couple on the verge of having a baby, a mother caring for a child with cancer, and a person with AIDS, among others. For some subjects, he plans to capture multiple portraits over time to chronicle their journeys.

Bacon, who now works with a small team that helps with administrative and business tasks, refers to the endeavor not as a project or even a website. He sees it as a movement. "I have done numerous projects over my career. This is something that goes beyond the normal project," he says. "We want to empower people, and with that empowerment lives will be moved."

The team's aim is to post two to three portraits with accompanying stories to the website each week. But the mission doesn't stop there. Bacon has launched a Billionaires Club, a group of volunteers willing to donate money, time, and skills to the endeavor. And his business plan calls for additional work. Next, he'll reach out to humanitarian groups to see how 7 Billion Ones can bring awareness to their causes via its website and its donated photography skills. He'd also like to organize humanitarian trips for people interested in lending a helping hand. In the final phase, he plans to orchestrate local 7 Billion Ones events for volunteers and participants.

"I genuinely love people. That is why I do what I do," Bacon says. "My mantra is, There are 7 billion people in the world, and each and every one of them is a unique work of art." •



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EQUIPMENT CRUSH

NEXT ON THE WISH LIST

▸ August heat turns our minds toward more refreshing temperatures. With Imaging USA 2016 kicking off in a mere five months, *Professional Photographer* editors are already daydreaming about it, not only for the cooler January temperatures but also for the goods on display at this hotly anticipated industry event.

And so we asked three Imaging USA speakers:

What new piece of equipment are you lusting after?

"The Profoto B2 location lighting kit. I use Profoto lights in my studio, and they're the best purchase I've made. The quality is second to none, and they continue to perform perfectly after many years of use. When I saw Profoto had released a compact location light that has its own battery pack so you don't have to plug into an outlet, I knew I wanted it. To get the same quality you expect from Profoto in a location lighting kit would be amazing, which is why I've also been stalking Profoto's website to see the images and videos showcasing the B2s. The light quality is amazing, and the modifiers to go with it help you shape it beautifully. The Profoto B2s are definitely on my wish list."

Kim Hartz, M.Photog., CPP

"The Phottix Indra500 light. When I do location shoots I take quite a bit of gear along to help overpower the sun and get the look I want. The Indra is a nice compact, battery-powered unit that supports TTL metering and high-speed sync, which would open up many more options to me while drastically decreasing the amount of gear I'd need to bring along."

Dave Doeppel

"The Epson Stylus Pro 9910 printer. The quality of the entire line of Epson printers is breathtaking, but I crave the wide format so that I could go into my vault of unprinted images and print to my heart's content."

Steve Kozak, M.Photog.Cr., CPP

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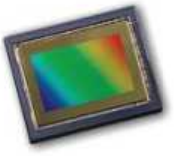

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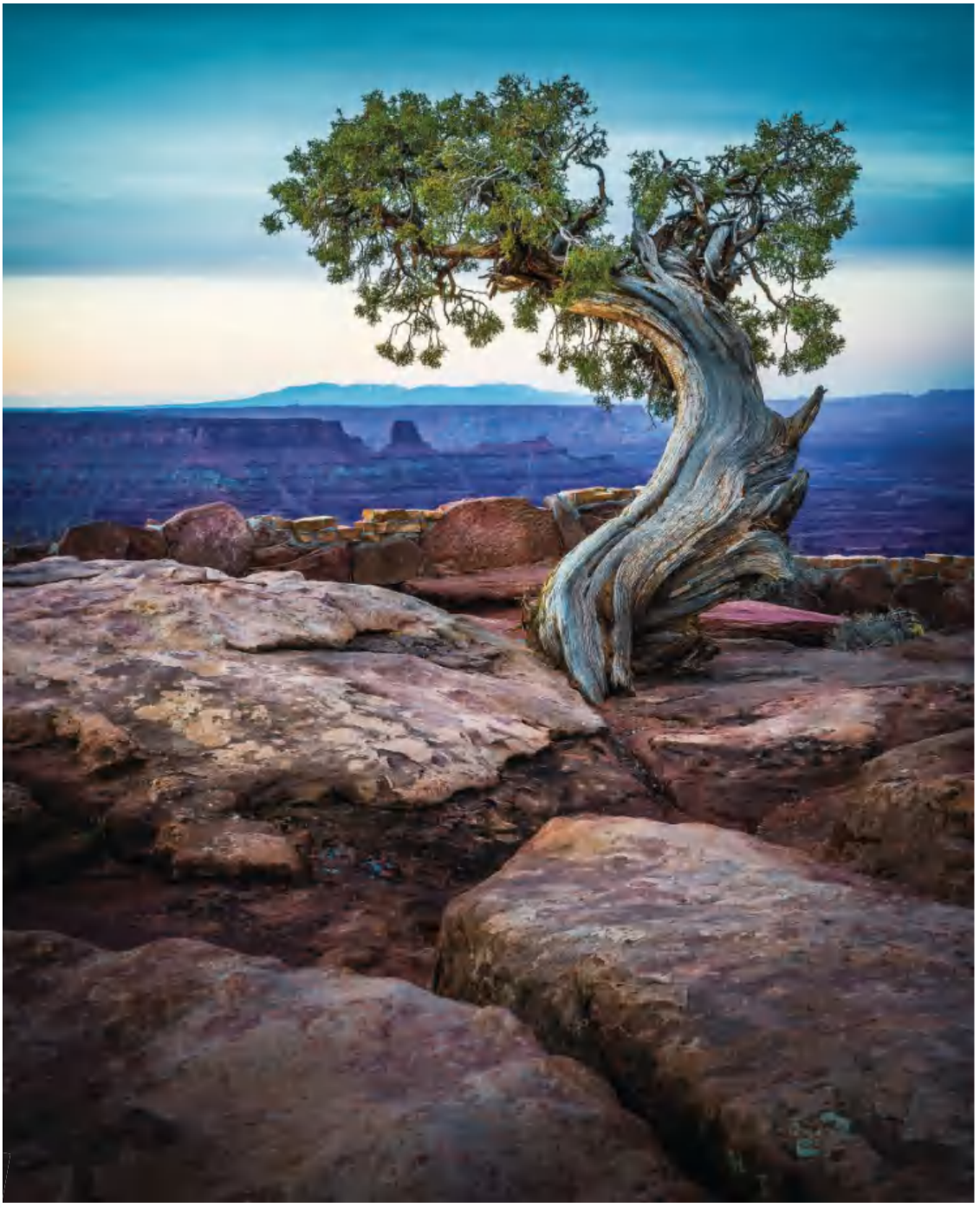
ON THE COVER

▸ While visiting Moab, Utah, to teach a landscape workshop, Randy Van Duinen, M.Photog.Cr., CPP, was tipped off by another instructor to check out Dead Horse State Park. Van Duinen arrived at the park just before sunrise, and as soon as he saw the juniper tree, he knew he'd found his subject, which he dubbed "The Sentinel." Van Duinen had about 15 minutes before the sun would break the horizon. He walked all around the tree before composing this image just as the sun rose. Randy Van Duinen Photography is based in St. Petersburg, Florida, and specializes in architectural, landscape, and digital artist photography. rvdphotography.com

- **CAMERA & LENS:** Canon EOS 5D Mark III, Canon EF 24-7mm f/2.8 lens
- **EXPOSURE:** 0.6 second at f/18, ISO 400
- **LIGHTING:** Natural light
- **POST-CAPTURE:** Van Duinen used Adobe Photoshop HDR Pro to combine five exposures and Lightroom to tone map, color correct, and enhance the image. He used Photoshop for final enhancements and sharpe



LOAN COLLECTION / ©RANDY VAN DUINEN

ABOUT THE LOAN COLLECTION

The current Loan Collection comprises more than 600 photographs chosen for distinction by jurors of PPA's International Photographic Competition. The compositions are considered the best of the best in contemporary professional photography, having been awarded the Loan Collection distinction based on their success in meeting the 12 elements of a merited image. ppa.com/ipc

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EVIL EYES

▸ Peter Burg, M.Photog.Cr., CPP, captured "Evil Eyes" at the Amelia Island Concours d'Elegance car show. "I am always on the lookout for classic automobiles with distinct lines," he says. He prefers photographing cars during the early morning hours, when the light is soft with little or no specular highlights. The biggest challenge in capturing this image was keeping people out of the shot. "Photographing these cars is like shooting into a mirror," he says. Burg Photographix is based in Maitland, Florida, and specializes in commercial and architectural photography. burgphoto.com

- **CAMERA & LENS:** Canon EOS 5D Mark III, Canon 24-105mm f/3.5-5.6 lens
- **EXPOSURE:** 1/60 second at f/16, ISO 400
- **LIGHTING:** Natural light
- **POST-CAPTURE:** Burg stripped out the background and removed unwanted reflections in Photoshop CS5. He created a new background for the car.

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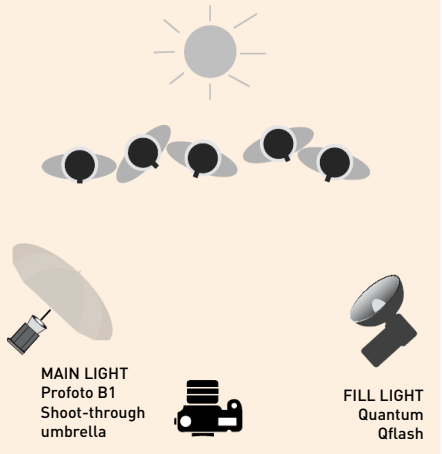
NO MAN IS AN ISLAND

▸ The family in MJ Morgan's "No Man is an Island" wanted a portrait at sunset on Utah's Great Salt Lake. The weather was less than ideal that day, with rain before and after the session. At sunset the clouds were so thick there was very little light to work with, says Morgan, CPP. "But we remained undeterred. This is one of my favorite images from this cold, wet day." My Style Photography specializes in fine-art and wedding photography. mystylephoto.com

- **CAMERA & LENS:** Sony Alpha a850, Sony 70-200mm f/2.8 G lens
- **EXPOSURE:** 1/125 second at f/4, ISO 200
- **LIGHTING:** Morgan set up a Profoto B1 strobe triggered by a PocketWizard transceiver for the main light and a Quantum Qflash for fill.
- **POST-CAPTURE:** Morgan used Adobe Photoshop for minor retouching and balancing skin tone, and made contrast and levels adjustments.

LIGHTING DIAGRAM



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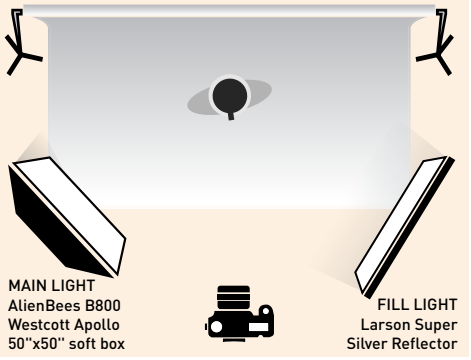
IT'S ALL ATTITUDE

▸ The little girl in "It's All Attitude" has been a client of Carrie Clippard-Perez since she was an infant. "She is full of personality and spunk, and it's a delight to photograph her," says Clippard-Perez. Since the subject has a sassy style, Clippard-Perez brought out props appropriate to the session. "When I saw her outfit, I thought we should go with a rock star quality, and so I threw in the shades for that touch of attitude," she says. Photography by Carrie LLC, based in Cape Girardeau, Missouri, specializes in baby and child photography. photographybycarrieperez.com

- **CAMERA & LENS:** Canon EOS-1D Mark III, Canon 24-70mm f/2.8L USM at 25mm
- **EXPOSURE:** 1/200 second at f/3.2, ISO 100
- **LIGHTING:** One AlienBees B800 with a Westcott Apollo 50x50-inch soft box with Larson super silver reflector
- **POST-CAPTURE:** Clippard-Perez processed the image in Adobe Photoshop Camera Raw. She removed soft box glare from the sunglasses and cleaned up skin and backdrop creases in Photoshop. She also used a studio-created action to pop color and Imagenomic Portraiture.

LIGHTING DIAGRAM



LOAN COLLECTION / ©CARRIE CLIPPARD-PEREZ

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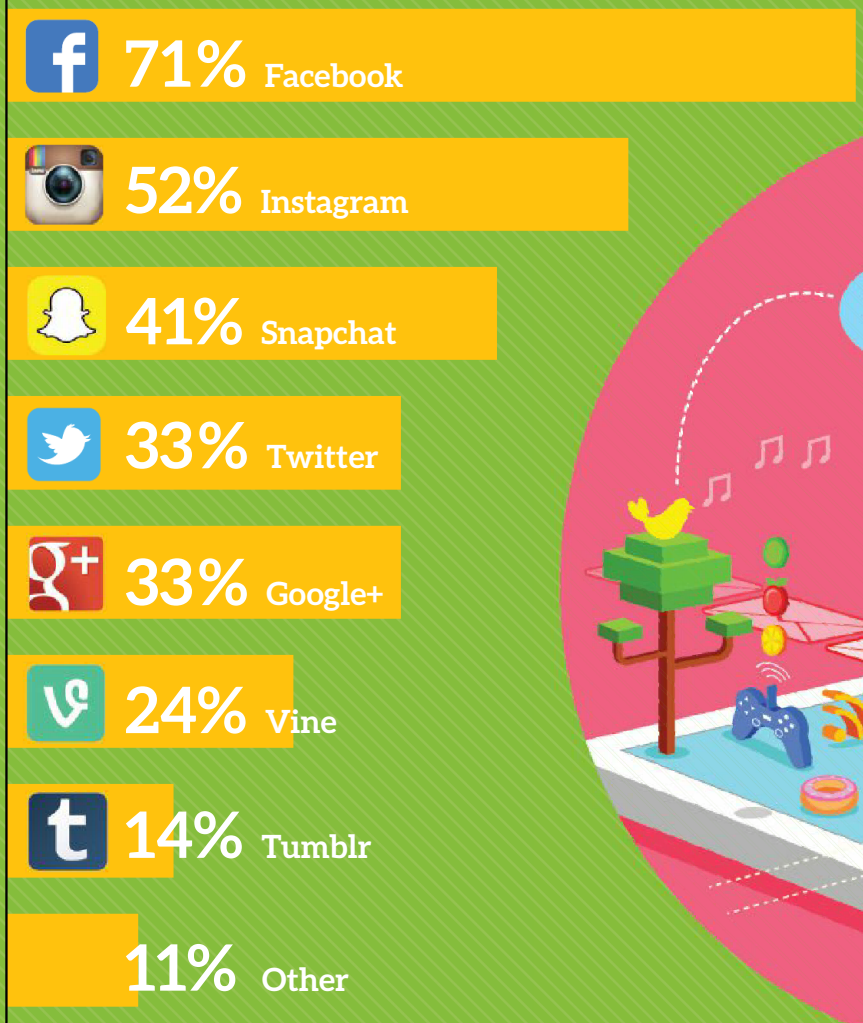
COOL KIDS

KNOW YOUR TEEN MARKET'S SOCIAL MEDIA HABITS

If your target market is teens, the best way to catch their attention is via the smartphone glued to their hands. But what's the social media site du jour among the under-eighteens?

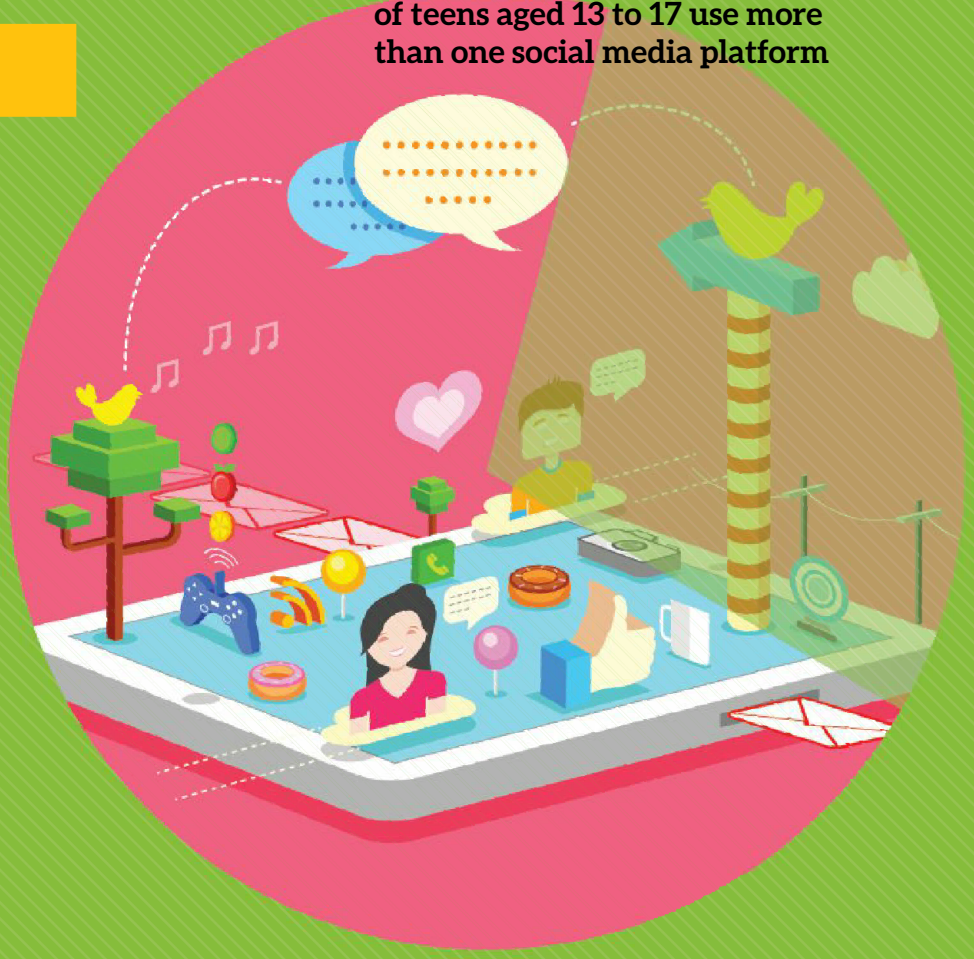
According to a 2015 study by Pew Research Center, 71 percent of teens aged 13 to 17 use more than one social media site, and Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat (in that order) are the three they visit with the most frequency. Though Facebook prevailed as the most used among teens in all households, the reported popularity of Instagram and Snapchat among teens rises with household income.

Percentage of all teens using each social media platform



71%

of teens aged 13 to 17 use more than one social media platform



ASK THE EXPERTS

APPOINTMENTS AND OUTTAKES

▸ Q. I have a good handle on doing in-person ordering appointments for portrait sessions, but how about for weddings when I'm taking 600 to 800 images?

A. It's possible to do projection sales with wedding clients; however, I don't suggest sitting with them as they choose from hundreds of images to make a print order. Here's the most important point: Everything must revolve around the album.

At my studio, we start preparing clients for an album investment from the very first time they walk through our door. After getting to know them, we focus on stories of other couples and share our sample albums. The goal is to create great value in the printed story.

After the wedding, we invite the couple for a reveal of their images. We offer them a glass of champagne and share a slideshow of our favorite images. After the reveal, we give them a custom printed card with the Web address of their image gallery so they can select their album favorites. They can also share the URL with friends and family who want to purchase prints.

After we've designed their album, we invite them back for the album reveal. We've already talked to them about the cost of adding pages to their album and explained that this is why we proof the album together. We discuss each spread and they choose whether they want to keep it, make changes, or remove it. Investing this time with your clients reminds them of the value of the album. You're also able to guide them through the edits while maintaining the integrity of your design. After you've narrowed down to the must-have spreads and recorded their edits, give them the price for any added spreads they've chosen. Be brave. Just say the amount and then be silent. If it's too high, encourage them to go back through the album and see what they can live without. Or perhaps you can offer a payment schedule if that helps them purchase the book they really want.

I don't talk about print orders until the album is ordered. Throughout the engagement process, we've been talking about wall portraits and collections, but I don't want to make that sale yet. When the album is delivered and my clients are turning pages for the first time, I remind them that some of the spreads would make an amazing wall collection. About half of our brides order wall portraits.

Kristin Privette, *Footstone Photography*

Q. Occasionally I have a client who asks to have all outtakes included with their package. I am contemplating adding the following clause to my contract: "Studio reserves the right to edit all photographs and deliver only edited photographs to the client. Any other photographs are considered outtakes and are not included in the contract." Is there a better way to phrase this?

A. It's a question we get asked frequently: Can we have all the pictures you took? It's important to have a statement in your contract about what's included in terms of the images as well as the type of editing. This is the statement I have in my contract to cover both topics:

"Quality standards of images: Final images, which are chosen by Carrie Wildes Photography, are edited and delivered to the client. All final images are professionally edited by our graphic designer, which includes color correction, cropping, simple facial retouching, and artistic effects such as black/white. Extensive retouching such as, but not limited to, significant acne, tan lines, sunglass glare, removal of people or backgrounds, teeth whitening, slenderizing, eyeglass glare, or swapping of heads is significantly labor intensive and charged on a per image basis."

Do all clients read the contract? No. It's necessary to explain what you include and have a good response when clients ask you that question. •

Carrie Wildes,
Cr.Photog., CPP,
Carrie Wildes
Photography Art & Design

ANY QUESTIONS?

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MAKING TIME

BUSINESS LESSONS FROM OTHER INDUSTRIES

by Bridget Jackson

▸ I keep a file of things to read "when I have time." I put that phrase in quotes because it seems more mythical than real. It only took me 5 years to get to the 2010 article I filed called "15 Things Every Business Owner Should Know." I wish I'd read it sooner because it has some great tidbits I can share with you.

"CASH IS KING." There are plenty of signs that a business is in trouble before that business literally runs out of cash. Would you be able to spot them? PPA recommends photographers keep a cost of sales ceiling of 25 percent. This yields a gross profit of 75 percent. How do you compare? You also need to control fixed expenses. Do you know your overhead costs, including rent and employee costs? Before you rent retail space or hire employees, make sure your cash flow is stable and capable of handling those additional fixed expenses and that you have a comfortable cash reserve for your seasonal business.

"SYSTEMS CAN BE HUMANE." It's important for every studio to have a documented workflow that details all the steps from a client's initial phone call to your delivery of the products. Not only is this useful in assigning responsibilities, but it also helps you determine the production time that needs to be included when preparing cost-based pricing on products. And it guides you in not going overboard on tasks such as post-processing. In addition, when you have a well-documented workflow, employees don't have to rely on the business owner to tell them what to do. The crux of this type of system, of course, is that you have to hire the right employees, who possess integrity, honesty, and love for what they do.

"PLAN FOR RAINY DAYS." Assess the cyclical periods of your business and look for product lines to help smooth them out. During the recent financial crisis, studios were forced to look for other revenue streams to help increase their cash flow and to smooth out what is typically a seasonal business. Often times, they relied on volume photography, which may have been inconsistent with their brand but which aided many studios in weathering the economy.

"CUSTOMER SERVICE IS NOT A DEPARTMENT; IT'S A WAY OF LIFE." In fact in our industry, customer service has reached a new level: hospitality. If you're finding it difficult to know how to reach that level, examine how you might emulate a store, restaurant, or hotel that resonates with your ideal client and your brand. Notice how they treat customers. Is there anything you can learn and use in your own studio? Delivering more than customers expect is a way for you to shine and leave an indelible mark on their experience with you. Referrals remain the top source of new business for photography studios. So treat clients to premium customer service and in return you may receive the biggest compliment of all, a referral.

"THE BEST SALESPEOPLE THRIVE ON REJECTION." The article addresses several key points that can apply to every photographer who claims "I'm just not good at sales." When someone says "No," then take it as a challenge to find another way to "Yes." This is where a sales script becomes so important. If you're hearing "No," look to your script and determine what changes need to be made. Maybe you need to update your price list or selling technique. With-out a sales script, it's difficult to identify where the sales process is faltering.

The article was a great reminder to me that we can and should take important business lessons from outside our own industry. If we don't, we run the risk of becoming myopic, seeing only what our peers and competitors are doing while being blind to ideas and best practices in other kinds of businesses. •

Bridget Jackson *manages PPA's consulting services, which helps photographers be more profitable. She is a certified public accountant.*

Focal length: 15mm Exposure: F/8 1/40 sec ISO400 © Ian Plant

Perspectives of power

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NETWORK IT

YES, YOU CAN LEARN TO LOVE IT

by Angela Pointon

▸ The very idea of meandering around in a crowd and connecting with people you don't know may be torturous enough to turn your stomach. Even though we know that such networking can have a positive impact on our business, many of are so uncomfortable that we just wouldn't do it.

Networking has the potential to catapult your business forward. Without networking, entrepreneurs often find themselves brainstorming in a vacuum and having little access to outside intelligence or business connections beyond the Internet.

I used to feel guilty about bailing on cocktail parties until I realized that social schmoozing wasn't the be-all and end-all of networking opportunities. It's easy to build a system of resources if you go about networking in your own way. If you can find a way to network that you enjoy, then suddenly your potential for success is multiplied by the number of times you make connections in ways that come easier to you. Here are some ideas.

A goal and a sense of purpose might be all you need to overcome your networking obstacle.

PLAN IT OUT. For some of us, the spontaneity of networking is a leading contributor to the feeling of dread. If this is true for you, try planning your networking in advance. Consider how long you'll be at a function and select three people you'd like to connect with during that time. A goal and a sense of purpose might be all you need to overcome your networking obstacle.

SCHEDULE A ONE-ON-ONE. Do you dread crowds? Networking one-on-one over coffee or participating in a portfolio review given by one mentor might be more enjoyable. No one requires that networking consist of masses of people. In fact, if the mere image of that type of room makes your palms sweat, avoid it altogether and seek out smaller, more intimate networking opportunities instead.

SAY THANKS. If you read a blog, listen to a podcast, or participate in webinars, take a minute to reach out to the author or speaker and say thank you. Despite having thousands of listeners or readers, educators often build one-on-one connections with the people who take time to comment or privately engage. You never know when you might need to lean on those connections for a little help.

PARTNER UP FOR LEADS. Business owners in your backyard (or in the Internet's virtual backyard) have the power to help your business grow. Engage with these potential partners and schedule some time to talk about a mutually beneficial lead-sharing or affiliate-marketing partnership. When you have an attractive purpose for making a connection, your potential for scheduling that time with other business owners increases exponentially.

BUILD A FACEBOOK GROUP. Wouldn't it be great if you could attend a mastermind group and discuss what's worked and what hasn't with people in your same situation? Facebook and Google Plus groups are a way to do that. Seek out similar business owners in non-competitive geographies and build a knowledge-sharing group to gain access to the experiences of others. Be forewarned that monitoring and engaging in an online group takes time, especially when you first start it.

TRAVEL TOGETHER. Conferences such as PPA's annual Imaging USA convention are wonderful networking opportunities even if you hate crowds. Buddying up with another photographer allows you to find comfort in having someone to eat or hang out with on breaks. Conference-going buddies can also split up and attend different sessions to maximize learning opportunities and share key points at the end of each day. Planning out an event with your buddy will also reduce angst and help you make the most out of your investment in each learning opportunity. •

Angela Pointon *advises photographers through Hand Select Your Clients. Visit handselectyourclients.com and add her on social media. Download free marketing tips at ppmag.com/profit-center.*

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EARN MORE, WORK THE SAME

USING BENCHMARKS TO ENHANCE PROFITABILITY

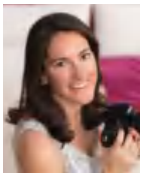
by Jeff Kent

For several years, Stephanie Anders, owner of Stephanie Anders Photography, had been humming along. Focused almost entirely on the artistic side of professional photography, she had built a solid customer base and was experiencing good growth of her Miami portrait studio. But as she eyed the next level for her business, she realized she didn't know how to get there.

SITUATION

Anders' sales were pretty good and the number of sessions she was photographing was where she wanted it, but she lacked a more detailed perspective on her finances. She wanted to understand more about managing her expenses, improving her per-session sales average, and conducting a more effective sales process. "I wanted to grow my business and make sure I was running it properly from a financial perspective," she says. "I knew I was profitable, but I didn't understand how to look at those numbers and grow."

In early 2013 Anders went to Imaging USA and attended a seminar given by Bridget Jackson, manager of PPA consulting services. Jackson discussed the basics of managerial accounting and some financial best practices for professional photography studios. Inspired, Anders returned home and began to reorganize her accounts in QuickBooks so she could practice better bookkeeping.



Stephanie Anders
Stephanie Anders Photography
stephanieanders.com

Anders also wanted to figure out a better sales process. Often, she simply sent her clients to an online gallery and let them place their own orders. When she did meet a client for a sales presentation, it was usually at a

coffee shop. She'd bring her iPad and scroll through images while they sipped lattes. The images were great, but Anders admits now that the coffees probably packed more of a punch than the presentations.

Anders worked out of the home but was desperate to move into a studio space. She felt that she could do more and sell more given a more professional environment. However, she wasn't sure if she could afford it or how to manage the expense within her overall financial structure.

SOLUTIONS

Anders spent about a year implementing some of the lessons she learned in Jackson's seminar, and she had some success. She had the willingness and aptitude to manage the financial elements on her own; she just needed more guidance. So in 2014 she took a three-day workshop from PPA mentor and member Allison Tyler Jones, CPP, and began working with both Jackson and Jones.

The three of them immediately launched

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into tracking Anders' expenses against the PPA Financial Benchmarks. For the first time, Anders began looking at things like cost of sales—the cost to produce goods for sale—as opposed to just tracking total sales. That process encouraged her to cut costs in wasteful areas and work more diligently to find great vendors at the best prices so she could increase her profit margin from each session without sacrificing the quality of her products. "Her costs were pretty good," recalls Jackson. "She mostly just had an issue with spending too much on props. She was shooting enough; her session counts were good. She just needed to make more per session."

Working with Jackson and Jones, Anders started to take steps toward maximizing each session. Critically, she began to grasp the concept that she didn't have to shoot more to make more money. Instead, she started working toward the ultimate goal of boosting profit so she could shoot the same number of sessions but take home more money.

One of the most important changes was the implementation of projection sales. Anders purchased ProSelect from TimeExposure and did some training on the software while at Imaging USA 2014. As soon as she got back from the convention, she started using projection sales and experienced an immediate boost in revenue. Rather than forcing clients to squint at an iPad or guide themselves through an online purchase process, she was able to direct a sales presentation by projecting images at actual size, with different framing options, and even show how those images would look on clients' walls.

Finally, Anders reviewed her packages and pricing. Jackson and Jones looked at all of her packages, gave feedback on pricing and the included items, and suggested new wording for each package description to position them as higher-end offerings. With this feedback in hand, Anders increased her pricing across the board. This not only helped support a higher level of product offering, it also boosted her ability to sell products with a higher profit margin. Anders bumped up a la carte prices for individual albums, prints, and canvases. At the same time, she dropped lower-end packages off the product list so the only package options were higher-end (and higher margin).

RESULTS

In the two years since she started using PPA Financial Benchmarks and working with PPA mentors, Anders has more than doubled her per-session sales average. That's helped her boost gross sales by about $65,000 without photographing a larger number of sessions. Her cost of sales is below the PPA

Benchmark, and she continues to experience positive growth in the business.

In March 2014, Anders moved into a commercial studio space. "Before making the decision, we looked at the numbers to see what I could afford," she says. "It was going to be a stretch, but we felt like it would increase sales from having a professional space to display sales presentations and also a place to do studio work. Before, I would show up at my client meetings with a bag of product samples. Now I have a big gallery with different items that clients can touch and feel."

Normally, PPA doesn't recommend overhead of more than 10 percent of gross sales, and moving into her desired space pushed

TAKEAWAYS

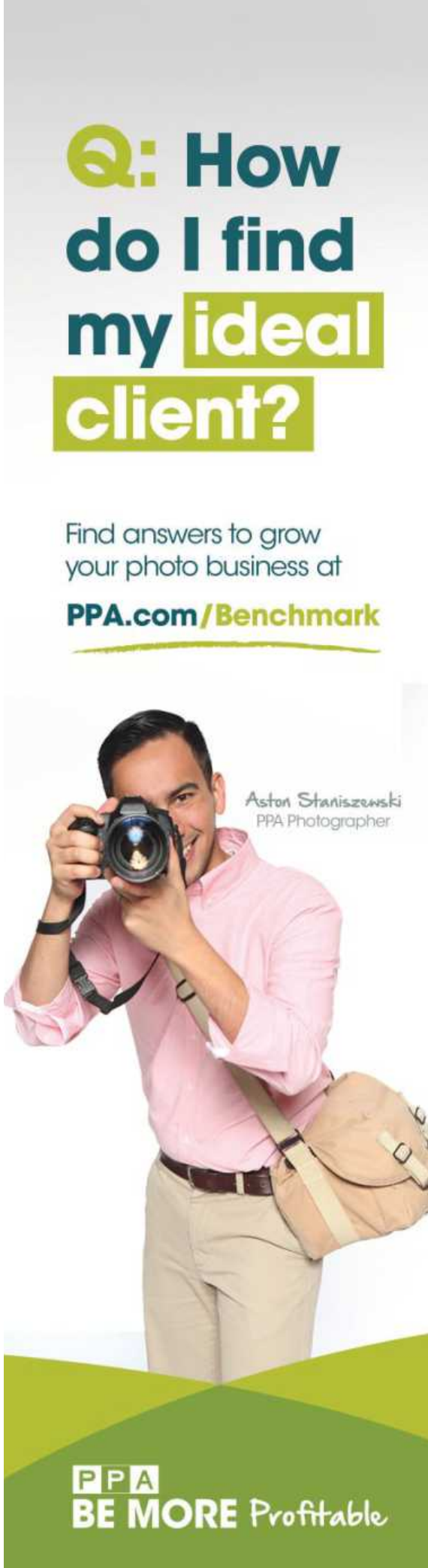
IT'S NEVER TOO LATE TO START. Digging into and understanding the PPA Financial Benchmarks is great for anybody at any point in their business. Whether you're starting out or experienced, the process begins where you are and goes from there.

STUDY YOUR NUMBERS. Anders now spends 5-7 hours per week looking at her numbers and planning out business initiatives based on those numbers. "We are running a business," she says. "It's just as important to stay on top of the numbers as it is to stay on top of the craft."

ACCOUNT MANAGERIALLY. Of the participants in the most recent PPA Financial Benchmark Survey, about 90 percent weren't using managerial accounting. Jackson finds this astounding. "If you're only keeping up your books for tax purposes, you are missing a critical strategic element in the management of your business," she says.

USE THE BENCHMARKS. The PPA Financial Benchmarks are a set of financial standards gathered by extensive surveying of hundreds of PPA members. These are your guideposts in the financial wilderness. If you're lost and looking for direction, why wouldn't you use the guides?

BASE HITS WIN GAMES. You don't have to make massive changes to turn around your business. Some people are so focused on hitting a home run, financially speaking, that they miss smaller opportunities that can add up to big money. Sometimes, just doing the fundamentals and shoring up the little details is all it takes.



Q: At what point can I afford to hire an employee for my studio?

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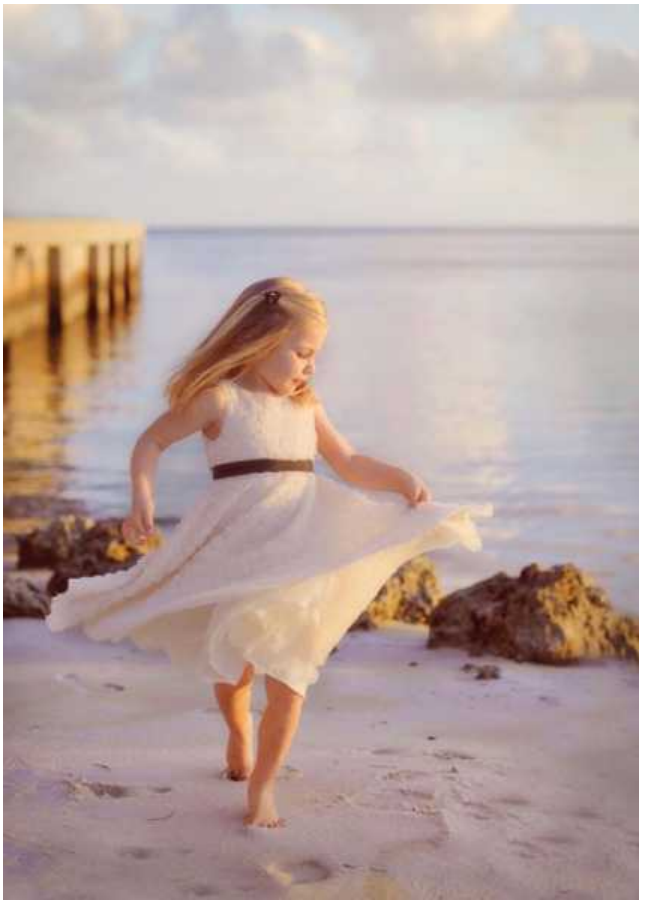

Anders beyond that level. However, Anders had more than doubled her revenue from 2011 to 2012 and then bumped it up again by 64 percent from 2012 to 2013. Looking at this strong pattern of growth in early 2014, Jackson believed Anders could justify the move. "She was at a point where the next stage of growth required moving to a studio, and we projected an increase in revenues from that new studio," says Jackson. "Also, she runs a really tight ship, so she could afford to spend a little more on rent because she's saving elsewhere. For example, her administrative costs are 7 percent of her gross sales, and we recommend 9 to 12 percent. Her cost of sales was projected at 15 percent of gross sales, well below the recommended 25 percent benchmark. That efficiency was pretty much the case across the board. Since she was meeting or exceeding all the other benchmarks, she could afford a little more for rent even if it brought her above the recommended benchmark for overhead expense."

Moving into the studio bumped up Anders' overhead expense to 15 percent of her gross sales, 5 percent more than PPA's recommended benchmark. But considering her thriftiness in other areas, her overall expenses still come in at 32 percent of gross sales—well below the total amount recommended by PPA. This means she's keeping 53 cents of every dollar she earns, which is a great mark for any professional photographer. "Even with that extra expense, she is still outperforming the highest-performing studios in her category because of her lean business practices in other areas," says Jackson. "When some people would have experienced a financial setback moving in to a new studio, she has been consistent. Now, with an updated sales plan and marketing strategy, she should experience continued growth."

Jackson adds that Anders has been aided by her focus and discipline. Rather than looking for massive changes, she meticulously works on the little things that make up a successful business. "She consistently works on all the components of her business, and that's how she has achieved success," explains Jackson. "She's not looking for the home run. She understands that being consistent and working on processes helps build longevity much more than someone who is just chasing that big win, because those are hard to come by."

Having that focus and discipline is something that Anders credits, in large part, to the lessons she has learned from PPA. Rather than floating adrift, she now feels grounded and in control of her destiny. "Working with these financial systems is not something that comes naturally to creative people. However, going through the process with people who are familiar with photographers and what they are going through is so helpful," she says. "I would recommend it to anyone who is interested in growing a business." •

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Remember what it was like when you started your business? Soon enough you're pulling in clients left and right and photographing and editing 60+ hours a week. Sure, you're busy, but when you crunch the numbers you realize you're doing all that work and not making any money. Months pass and it doesn't get better. In fact, it might even be getting worse. And you're dog-tired!

Running a Photography Business Is a Lot of Work.

Hopefully you didn't learn that the hard way, but unfortunately many photographers do. You've got the passion and talent but you were never taught how to run a business. And guess what? It's a skill all in its own. But there's a way to get the business know-how you need.

Get Back to Basics, Then Break Through!

Business Basics that is! PPA has helped thousands of studios just like yours Be More Profitable and financially sound. A big reason for that are PPA's business workshops—intimate, in-person classroom workshops led by talented, profitable photographers.

PPA business workshops will help you create a plan for establishing a profitable and sustainable business while also increasing your sales average and building your brand.

The two-day Business Basics workshops are for business owners who want to build a solid foundation based on experienced insights and accurate information from a source they can trust. You'll acquire the necessary skills to create a business model and profitable pricing structure to fit your studio.

Once you start grossing at least $20,000 in annual sales, the three-day Business Breakthroughs workshop, held annually right before Imaging USA, is for you. The immersive education you'll receive on effective branding, targeting, marketing and techniques for maximizing sales will take your business to the next level.

PPA Understands Every Business is Unique.

That's why these workshops aren't one-size-fits-all. Real, successful photographers and business mentors use PPA's Benchmark survey to apply solutions that will work just for you. Where else are you going to find that?

Consider joining PPA and signing up for the next Business Basics workshop, August 29-30 at PPA headquarters in Atlanta. With PPA, you can Be More In-Control of your business and your life.

Boost Your PROFITS With More Savings!

Did you know you can save a lot of money on credit card processing fees? PPA got crazy low credit card processing for its members by negotiating deeply discounted rates with Bank of America Merchant Services. PPA photographers that have made the switch already started saving hundreds. Some, even thousands!

How? The math is easy: this gets you an interchange rate plus 0.07% and only 7¢ per transaction. That's one of the lowest rates out there, big savings for photographers!

There are NO hidden fees. Add $9.95 per month to process mobile transactions. That's it! Each month the savings will vary with the amount of transactions you process, but the savings add up fast. This perk alone might even pay for your PPA membership!

Check how much you could save now, the comparison is free!

PPA.com/BAMS

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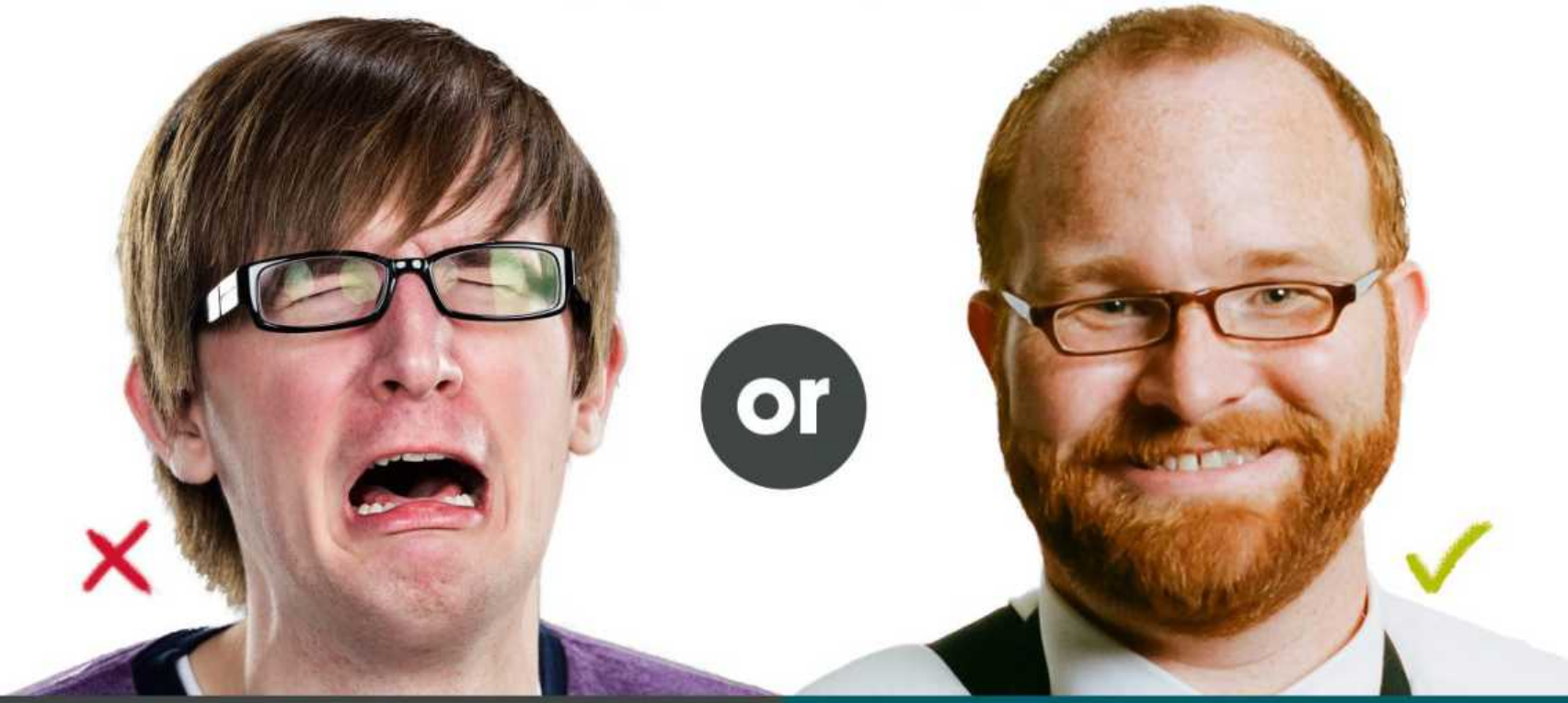
Are you prepared?

What happens if you...

Break your camera, lose all the images on your memory card AND your client files a complaint?



Not with PPA		Neal Carpenter, CPP PPA Photographer
Hundreds or Thousands of Dollars!	Repair/Replace Camera Lens	**$250 deductible**
$2,000+	Litigation fees + Data Recovery Cost	**$200 deductible**
$4,000+	Settlement Cost for Client Complaints	**$200 deductible**

PPA
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PPA.com/TellMeMore

THE GOODS

PRODUCTS, TECHNOLOGY & TECHNIQUE

STREET VIEW REVOLUTION

ALL-ROUND PANORAMA

Take a beautiful, seamless, 360x275-degree HDR image and have it ready to upload in minutes. Scotland-based NCTech, makers of industrial-use panoramic systems, aims to start shipping its new iris360 this month.

The spherical camera system is simple and lightweight and automatically does its own onboard image processing. Users control it remotely with any Wi-Fi enabled smartphone or tablet. The iris360 analyzes the scene, captures the shots, processes them, and produces one panoramic image ready for sharing online, including Google Maps and Street View or any social media platform.

Bars, restaurants, and boutique shops will love the resulting images that help them be seen and entice customers to their doors. $1,999

nctechimaging.com/iris360

IMAGE COURTESY NCTECH

All-star

By Jeff Kent

The brightest new stars come out for the 16th annual reveal of the Hot One Awards

1

This month the Hot One Awards enters its 16th year, old enough to drive in most states and downright venerable by modern media standards. Yet this contest refreshes itself each year, keeping a finger on the new and the notable and honoring the brightest rising stars among photographic products and services released over the past year. As usual, we had hundreds of entries from nearly 100 different companies, everything from mobile apps to macro lenses. For more details about the Hot One Awards, check out "The Process" on page 49.

We asked our judges—all professional photographers—to make their assessments based on innovation, design, value for price, and usefulness as a practical business tool, and we rewarded the products that received the highest accolades.

Based on their feedback, we assigned the following four-dozen Hot One Awards to this very worthy group of winners. This collection of products represents the professionals' choices from what's new and hot, this year's top offerings, hot off the presses and compiled just for you!

2

1: Manfrotto Off Road Hiker 30L Backpack
2: Canon EOS 7D Mark II
3: Pocket Albums
4: Alien Skin Software Exposure 7
5: LexJet Wall Pro by York-Next Generation
6: Denny Manufacturing Newborn Moon Prop
7: Lowel Pro Power LED

3

PROFESSIONAL PHOTOGRAPHER
HOT ONE
AWARDS 2015

4

5

6

7

Cameras

DIGITAL SLR (FULL-FRAME SENSOR)

Canon EOS 5DS

An ideal blend of high resolution and high performance, the Canon EOS 5DS boasts a 50.6-megapixel full-frame CMOS sensor, and a 61-point High Density Reticular AF system designed to deliver precision autofocus. It's got a built-in crop function, full HD and time-lapse movie capture, and an anti-flicker system to round out its qualifications. $3,699.99. usa.canon.com

DIGITAL SLR (APS-C SENSOR)

Canon EOS 7D Mark II

The Canon EOS 7D Mark II digital SLR combines cutting-edge functions with ergonomic design for fast, versatile shooting. With a 20.2-megapixel CMOS sensor powered by dual DIGIC 6 Image Processors, the EOS 7D Mark II shoots up to 10 frames per second at native ISOs ranging from 100–16,000. A 65-point, cross-type AF system provides tack-sharp autofocus on the go. $1,799.99. usa.canon.com

MIRRORLESS INTERCHANGEABLE-LENS CAMERA

Olympus OM-D E-M5 Mark II

The OM-D E-M5 Mark II packs fantastic image quality into a compact, lightweight body. Featuring the world's first 5-axis image stabilization system, the compensation yields smooth, blur-free still and video capture. The camera has a dust-proof, splash-proof body and uses the extensive OM-D M.Zuiko lens system. $1,099.99. getolympus.com

Lenses

PORTRAIT LENS

Canon EF-S 24mm f/2.8 STM

The lightweight Canon EF-S 24mm f/2.8 STM is a fast lens with advanced autofocus and superior optics. With a 35mm focal length equivalent of 38mm, it's well suited to portraiture and a variety of other uses. The lens excels during video capture thanks to an STM motor that produces silent and smooth focus tracking, plus a micro-stepping drive that keeps aperture changes quiet. Specialized coatings reduce ghosting and flare. $149.99. usa.canon.com

TELEPHOTO ZOOM LENS

Canon EF 100-400mm f/4.5-5.6L IS II USM

The EF 100-400mm f/4.5-5.6L IS II USM lens delivers an impressive combination of performance and resolving power, all in a compact package. The lens provides impressive contrast and resolution with reduced chromatic aberration across the entire zoom range. A special coating reduces backlit flaring and ghosting and lessens smears and fingerprints. Canon's Optical Image Stabilizer provides up to four stops of image correction. $2,199.99. usa.canon.com

MULTI-FUNCTION LENS

Nikon AF-S Nikkor 300mm f/4E PF ED VR

The Nikon AF-S Nikkor 300mm f/4E PF ED VR prime lens is the lightest full-frame autofocus lens at its focal length. This versatile mid-telephoto almost completely eliminates chromatic aberration while producing beautiful bokeh shots. The autofocus is ultra-fast and extremely quiet. Vibration Reduction stabilizes for camera shake and offers special modes for sports and tripod shooting. $1,999.95. nikonusa.com

ACTION LENS

Canon EF 400mm f/4 DO IS II US

The EF 400mm f/4 DO IS II USM lens delivers a new level of sharpness, exceptional color balance, and clarity with the high-speed performance professionals need from an action lens. New lens coatings help reduce ghosting and reduce fingerprints. Dust- and water-resistant construction keeps the lens clean while an image stabilization system offers up to four stops of compensation. AF stop buttons let you stop autofocus at any time. $6,899.99. usa.canon.com

WIDE-ANGLE LENS

Canon EF 11-24mm f/4L USM

The EF 11-24mm f/4L USM is the widest zoom lens Canon has ever made. Great for landscapes, interior shots, scene-setting images, and unique perspectives, the lens keeps flare and ghosting to a minimum while a nine-blade circular aperture diaphragm creates pleasantly blurred backgrounds. A rear focus system and ring USM provide silent, fast autofocus. Minimum focusing distance is 11 inches. $2,999.99. usa.canon.com

THE PROCESS

PROFESSIONAL PHOTOGRAPHER HOT ONE AWARDS 2015

We often receive questions about how the Hot One Awards work and how winners are selected. Every year we review the process and try to make it as fair and inclusive as possible. Here's a rundown of how it's done and the considerations that fuel the process.

ENTRY QUALIFICATION. We choose a one-year time window in which the entries must be released and available for consumer use. This window opens the day after the previous year's Hot One Awards entry closes, and it closes on a date one year later. We factor in time for judging, for descriptions to be written and edited, and for the magazine to go to press.

SEEKING ENTRIES. We send out an email invitation (and a second reminder) to our comprehensive list of photography industry suppliers. We also announce the open entry window through our social media outlets. For a product to be considered in the contest, it must meet the release guidelines and have been submitted by a representative of the company.

SEEKING JUDGES. We hand pick and personally invite dozens of professional photographers to volunteer their time and expertise to judge the Hot One Awards. Among those invited to judge this year were Imaging USA speakers, highly respected mentors and teachers, and International Photographic Competition Diamond Photographers of the Year.

JUDGING. We ask judges to vote in categories in which they feel they have a qualified knowledge base of experience. We also ask judges who have a professional affiliation with a product manufacturer to withhold their votes from categories in which that manufacturer has an entry.

Lighting

PORTABLE POWER

Vagabond Lithium Extreme

The VLX Vagabond Lithium Extreme from Paul C. Buff offers a reliable, lightweight, portable power source that can fully recharge in three hours. The VLX provides

a current-controlled, pure sine wave power source, operating flashes from an internal lithium iron phosphate battery and powers multiple flashes up to 3,200-watt-seconds with faster recycle times than previous versions. $399.95. paulcbuff.com

STUDIO LIGHTING

Westcott Basics D5

The Westcott Basics D5 gives you a simple, powerful lighting solution without taking a chunk of your income. Part of the Basics lineup, the D5 features five ceramic light sockets suitable for daylight balanced lamps up to 85 watts, controlled individually with five switches on the back. $99.90. fjwestcott.com

CONTINUOUS LIGHT/LED

Westcott Flex

The Westcott Flex is a bendable, moldable LED mat with impressive output. Available in 5,600K daylight and 3,200K tungsten 10x10-inch models, these 7-ounce LED mats are rainproof, flicker-free, and silent. Flex mats can be mounted or taped in nearly any location. Users direct the output by simply bending the mat, making it a light source and a modifier built into one portable unit. $599.90. fjwestcott.com

Lowel Pro Power LED

The Lowel Pro Power LED takes Lowel's 50-plus years of engineering experience and focuses it on a new evolution in LED lighting. The Pro Power LED is a compact, focusing light available in hi-CRI tungsten or daylight with impressive output and a wide Fresnel focus range. The light is dimmable without color shift and is light enough to hand hold and powerful enough to light from a distance. It's available in a number of kit combinations. $699.95. lowel.tiffen.com

SPEEDLIGHT/HOT SHOE FLASH

Nikon SB-500 Speedlight

Simplicity meets power in the updated Nikon SB-500 Speedlight, upholding Nikon's superlative tradition of compact, lightweight on-location lighting. The SB-500 offers 180-degree coverage (left and right) and a 90-degree tilt (upward). It even has video applications with a built-in LED light creating daylight-balanced uniform lighting. It features a wireless option and i-TTL technology for compatible cameras. $249.95. nikonusa.com

Phottix Mitros+ TTL Flash for Sony (ISO Hot Shoe)

The Phottix Mitros+ TTL Transceiver Flash combines the best of Phottix's products into one all-inclusive unit: a flash with Phottix Odin transmitter and receiver, a built-in Strato receiver, and the new Sony ISO Hot Shoe. Very popular since its release earlier this year, the Mitros+ can be used on or off camera and can control and trigger remote flash by radio signal. $399. phottix.com

SPEEDLIGHT MODIFIER

Rogue FlashBender 2 XL Pro Lighting System

The versatile Rogue FlashBender 2 XL Pro Lighting System includes a 13x16-inch FlashBender reflector plus a soft box and strip grid. It stores flat or folds to fit a 15-inch laptop compartment. This system also boasts new custom ultra-lightweight fabric for more flexible light shaping. $99.95. rogueflash.com

REFLECTOR

Westcott Omega Reflector

Here's innovation for you. The Omega Reflector is a shoot-through reflector that can simulate ring light with a reflection and produce a main light and back light with a single light source. Not enough? It also keeps the reflector out of frame. It features a 2:3 removable center frame in all five surfaces: a one-stop diffusion panel, and black, white, silver, and sunlight fabric cover surfaces. $119.90. fjwestcott.com

SOFT BOX

Paul C. Buff Foldable Giant Stripbox

New from Paul C. Buff, this 14x60-inch rectangular soft box provides a diffused output for controlled, even coverage with its highly reflective silver surface interior. Each box includes a second internal baffle that attaches inside the box to create a softer light with double diffusion. Its recessed front lip helps minimize lens flare and can also hold a grid. $144.95. paulcbuff.com

Studio equipment

PRODUCTIVITY TOOL
Lexar Professional Workflow HR2
The Professional Workflow HR2 is a high-speed, four-bay reader and storage drive hub that offers both Thunderbolt 2 and USB 3.0 connections. It's compatible with Windows and Mac OS and has a modular design to let you create a custom setup of slot readers and storage drives to maximize your workflow efficiency. $199.99. lexar.com

TEEN/ADULT BACKGROUND
King Louis Charcoal Backdrop CP 7535
A versatile scene designed for elegance, the King Louis Charcoal Backdrop provides an upscale looking background for teen and adult portrait sessions. Available on canvas and Freedom Cloth. $139. dennymfg.com

BABY/CHILD BACKGROUND
Backdrop Outlet Posable Baby Drop Backgrounds
Posable Baby Drop Backgrounds feature adorable set illustrations sized to fit an infant into the action. Each piece is printed on a heavy-duty, matte vinyl. $55. backdropoutlet.com

PROP
Newborn Moon Prop
Designed for small babies, the Newborn Moon Prop measures 24x24x12 inches and is built to be sturdy. The prop is made of lightweight hard-coated foam so it's portable and easy to implement indoors and outdoors. $169. dennymfg.com

Notable

APP BUILDER
StickyApps
The new StickyApps builder enables you to create custom apps and websites for small businesses. Paired with the StickyPayments system, it becomes a useful e-commerce tool for generating seasonal revenue through a pricing model that helps you bundle services into a monthly payment plan. $499. stickyacademy.com

WALL COVERING
LexJet WallPro by York-Next Generation
LexJet WallPro is an inkjet-printable wallpaper compatible with solvent, low-solvent, latex, UV-curable, and latex inks. This permanent wall mural solution is suitable for a range of environments. $50-$320. lexjet.com

ONE OF THE MANY
FACES OF PPA

Alli Garrigan
Ali Garrigan Design, New London, Wisconsin
PPA member since 2014
AliGarriganDesign.com
Ali Garrigan Design
@AliGarriganDES

Because I was an experienced graphic designer, I hold an appreciation for quality imagery. I wanted to learn how to create high-quality images, so I began teaching myself. Eventually, it became not only a creative outlet but people sought me out for photography sessions. It's really been quite an experience.

In the near future, I hope to be well known in my area for quality family and senior photography.

PPA introduced me to the professional photography community. I stepped outside my comfort zone and attended Imaging USA 2015 in Nashville - it was a great experience! Rather than be intimidated, PPA gave me confidence and now I'm looking forward to future experiences.

Gear

TRIPOD

Manfrotto 190 Go! Tripod

The aluminum 190 Go! Tripod features new twist leg locks that let you open all sections at one time with one hand, plus Manfrotto's 90-degree center column, which lifts out of the casting and allows the center column to swing to the horizontal position. It's only 3.75 pounds and 17.7 inches long when fully collapsed and extends to a maximum height of 57.48 inches. $199.99. manfrotto.us

ROLLER BAG

Think Tank Airport Roller Derby

Think Tank's Airport Roller Derby has eight wheels in four dual-wheel sets that give the bag three ways to roll: upright at your side, tilted on its back wheels, or tilted on its side wheels for a narrow profile. It's a high-capacity carry-on designed to hold a 15-inch laptop and a full load of photo gear. Security features include a lock and cable and lockable zippers. $389.75. thinktankphoto.com

SHOULDER BAG

Tenba Messenger DNA 13

The Messenger DNA 13 is designed to be a year-round, all-weather performance bag. cludes a reversible weather wrap, steel D rings, body armor base panel, an adjustable trolley strap, a security strap that holds the bag behind you if you're on a bike, and magnetic closure clips. $159.95. tenba.com

HIKING BAG

Manfrotto Off Road Hiker 30L Backpack

Manfrotto's Off Road Hiker 30L Backpack is designed for long treks to your secret spots. The removable camera compartment is padded with Manfrotto's Camera Protection System, and the pack features a padded waist belt and chest straps, a breathable back, and a front strap to carry your camera on your chest to reduce neck strain and for easy access. $199.99. manfrotto.us

ACCESSORY

Toddy Gear Smart Cloth

The 9x9-inch Smart Cloth is a dual-sided microfiber cloth that's perfect for cleaning sensitive screens and surfaces, including camera lenses. Use the plush microfiber material on one side to clean and the patterned silk microfiber on the other side to buff and polish. It also features a protective coating to prevent the buildup of mold and mildew. $14.99. toddygear.com

CAMERA STABILIZER

Flashpoint ZeroGrav Gyro

The Flashpoint ZeroGrav Gyro from Adorama is specially designed to detect a camera's angular velocity and acceleration in 3-D space, calculating the camera's position to provide an amazing level of stability assistance for even the most complex motion

shoots. Balance can be adjusted easily on the base plate for optimal support. Twin handles provide a steady grip, center of gravity assurance, and pitch balance. $1,199. adorama.com

MEDIA CARD

Lexar Professional 1000x microSDHC/microSDXC UHS-II card

Lexar Professional 1000x microSDHC/microSDXC UHS-II cards offer read transfer speeds up to 150MB per second. Designed for sports camcorders, tablets, and smartphones, the new microSD cards leverage Ultra High Speed II (U3) to provide faster capture, play back, and transfer of photo and video files. Available in 32GB, 64GB, and 128GB capacities. $32.99-$114.99. lexar.com

FILTER

Tiffen XLE Filter Series

Developed with long exposure photography in mind, the XLE Filter Series offers a new filter technology that helps color-correct images captured during extreme exposure situations. Three distinct 10-stop filters carry varying levels of IR filtration and attenuate for the far red and IR wavelengths that commonly pollute long exposure images photographed on today's modern camera sensors. $17.06-$275. tiffen.com

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ALBUM

Printed Wood Covers for Miller's Signature Albums

Miller's now offers its Signature Albums with a cover image printed onto a maple wood surface, allowing the wood-grain to come through. Wood Covers can be paired with Miller's standard, distressed, pearlescent, or textured leathers. $75-$170. millerslab.com

WALL DISPLAY

Bay Photo 48x96-inch Maximum Size Prints

Bay Photo now offers 48x96-inch Maximum Size Prints on metal and wood. Each print can stand alone or act as a component of a larger multi-print installation. MetalPrints are infused with dyes directly onto the surface of coated aluminum sheets, giving the images an engaging luminescence. Wood prints are UV printed directly on to 1/2-inch thick certified sustainable maple wood board. $999. bayphoto.com

SALES

Design Aglow Inspire Guide: Show & Sell Wall Galleries

The Design Aglow Inspire Guide is a collection of 50 hand-drawn gallery layouts compiled into one all-encompassing presentation designed to help you sell beautiful wall galleries. The template comes with a cover and welcome page that you can tailor to your studio, and the content is fully customizable within Photoshop or InDesign to include your studio information, pricing, logo, and more. $95. designaglow.com

MARKETING PRODUCT

Miller's Foil Pressed Cards

Foil Pressed Cards from Miller's Professional Imaging are eye-catching marketing pieces printed on classic felt or pearl paper stock, and then lightly pressed with gold, opal, red, rose gold, silver foil, or black foil. Great for holiday, wedding, and client appreciation cards, small marketing pieces, and other applications. $31.25 for 25. millerslab.com

PACKAGING

Studio Essentials Flash Drive & Box DVD Replacement Kits

Studio Essentials are 4GB flash drive and packaging kits designed to replace CDs and DVDs. They're available in three styles: Wood Flash Drive & Wood Box, Color Snap Box & Colorful Swivel Drive, and Metal Tin with Industrial Metal Drive. Each kit includes logo and design customization. Sold in packs of 10, 20, or 50. $150 for 10. photoflashdrive.com

NOVELTY PRODUCT

Custom Vinyl Banners

New from Denny Manufacturing, Custom Vinyl Banners are printed on high-quality matte vinyl. All sizes come with metal grommets and sewn edges for easy hanging. Great for schools, sports, and special events promoting your studio. Priced by size and specs. dennymfg.com

DISPLAY PRODUCT

Rice Studio Supplies Kava Print Boxes

Kava Print Boxes are handmade from abaca (banana leaf) paper, and feature a coconut shell button closure. They are sustainable and naturally archival (chlorine and acid free), giving you an environmentally friendly display option. They come in 4x6-, 5x7-, and 8x10-sizes and are available with logo engraving. $4.99-$13.99. ricestudiosupplies.com

Inkjet printer & papers

METALLIC

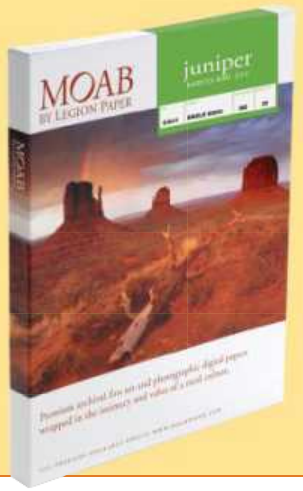
Epson Metallic Photo Paper

Epson Metallic Photo Paper, available in Luster and Glossy, provides a rich color gamut, excellent sharpness, and exceptional depth. It delivers a commendable Dmax and offers a unique metallic surface that gives images a different look from traditional inkjet media. Available in rolls and cut sheets. $24-$359. proimaging.epson.com

MATTE

Moab by Legion Paper

Juniper Baryta Rag 305



The new Moab Juniper Baryta Rag 305 is a 100-percent-cotton, true-baryta (barium sulfate) fiber paper that holds detail in the deep blacks while producing natural white highlights, all with a slight fiber glossy surface texture. This double-weight, coated inkjet fine-art paper echoes the charm of silver halide by using state-of-the-art coating technology. $18.98-$325.98. moabpaper.com

INKJET PRINTER

Epson SureColor P600

The Epson SureColor P600 13-inch photo printer combines an advanced MicroPiezo print head with Epson UltraChrome HD pigment inks driven by Epson's AccuPhoto HD imaging technology. The inks deliver unrivaled black density, vivid color output, instant color stability, and exceptional print permanence ratings. Improved paper roll support allows for panoramic prints up to 10 feet long. $799.99. proimaging.epson.com

Software & design

ALBUM DESIGN

Album TD Album Turbo Design

Album Turbo Design allows all album sheets to be designed at the same time in a single design area, using multiple align-

ment options. The application includes backgrounds, masks, clipart, and billions of layout combinations. Exports to JPEG and full layered Photoshop documents. $115.50. albumtd.com

CREATIVE EFFECTS

Alien Skin Software Exposure 7

Alien Skin Software Exposure 7 features non-destructive raw editing, fast file browsing, a crop and rotate tool, film emulations, more than 470 presets, and dozens of new textures. It comes with easy exporting functionality and can be used as a standalone program or as a plug-in for Lightroom and Photoshop. $149. alienskin.com

Blackmagic Design DaVinci Resolve 11

DaVinci Resolve 11 boasts more than 100 new video editing and color grading features, including major improvements in online editing plus context-sensitive trimming, photographer-style color grading tools, and a new collaborative workflow capability. $995. blackmagicdesign.com

RETOUCHING

Perfectly Clear Plug-Ins 2.0

The Perfectly Clear Photoshop Plug-Ins 2.0 for Photoshop or Lightroom now features Beautify, one of the most popular features of the Perfectly Clear mobile app, but with added features. It automatically reduces wrinkles and smooths skin, removes blemishes and shine, enhances skin tone and eyes, and more, without going overboard. $149. athentech.com

PHOTO/VIDEO PRODUCTION

Animoto Pro 24

Animoto Pro helps you combine photos with video clips, text, and music to create professional HD video. The latest version features six new photographer-designed video styles, three new customizable video styles, longer video clips, and the ability to add your own logo, as well as upgrades to the software's Lightroom Plugin. $239. animoto.com

PHOTO/VIDEO ORGANIZATION

Mylio

Mylio compiles your pictures from Facebook, Flickr, SD cards, your camera roll, computers, and hard drives into a common place. It syncs images across your phone, notebooks, and tablet so that you always have the right picture on the right device. All of your images are protected across your devices without the optional cloud offering. Mylio presents a simple interface that works across multiple devices. Annual subscriptions $50-$250. mylio.com

BUSINESS/PRODUCTIVITY

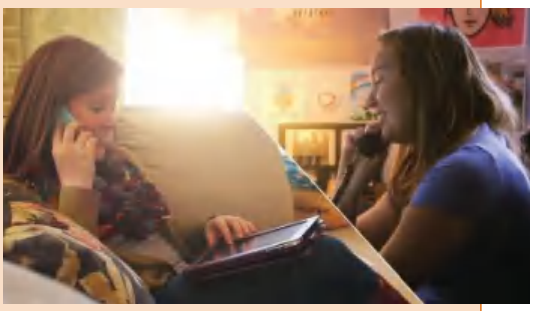
TimeExposure ProSelect 2015r1

In addition to the existing bevvy of display and sales features, the ProSelect Pro 2015r1 update incorporates advanced book creation using smart filtering and design features that comply with almost any supplier. The system allows you to enter the page dimensions into a new book design specification, and then your templates will automatically resize to fit those pages. $779. timeexposure.com

WEBSITE DESIGN AND MANAGEMENT

Photobiz Custom Site Design Service

PhotoBiz fits nicely between free-but-time-consuming website builders and expensive, super-custom Web design agencies. Their



Custom Site Design offers an affordable, yet managed custom site created through consultation with their in-house designers. The PhotoBiz service team supports the site, and purchasers get access to other educational and marketing materials from PhotoBiz. $890. photobiz.com •

MOBILE ALBUM APP

Pocket Albums

Pocket Albums builds albums for mobile devices, giving people a way to carry their album with them. You can insert your logo and contact information so as your clients share the photos, they also share your information. $5. acilab.com

PHOTO APP

Adobe Lightroom on Mobile

With the Lightroom on Mobile app, Adobe empowered users to access their entire catalog of photos on Apple and Android devices and seamlessly manage, edit, and share those images. The app automatically imports photos from the camera roll and syncs back to a Lightroom catalog on a desktop computer. Changes and edits are automatically synced too. $9.99/month. adobe.com •

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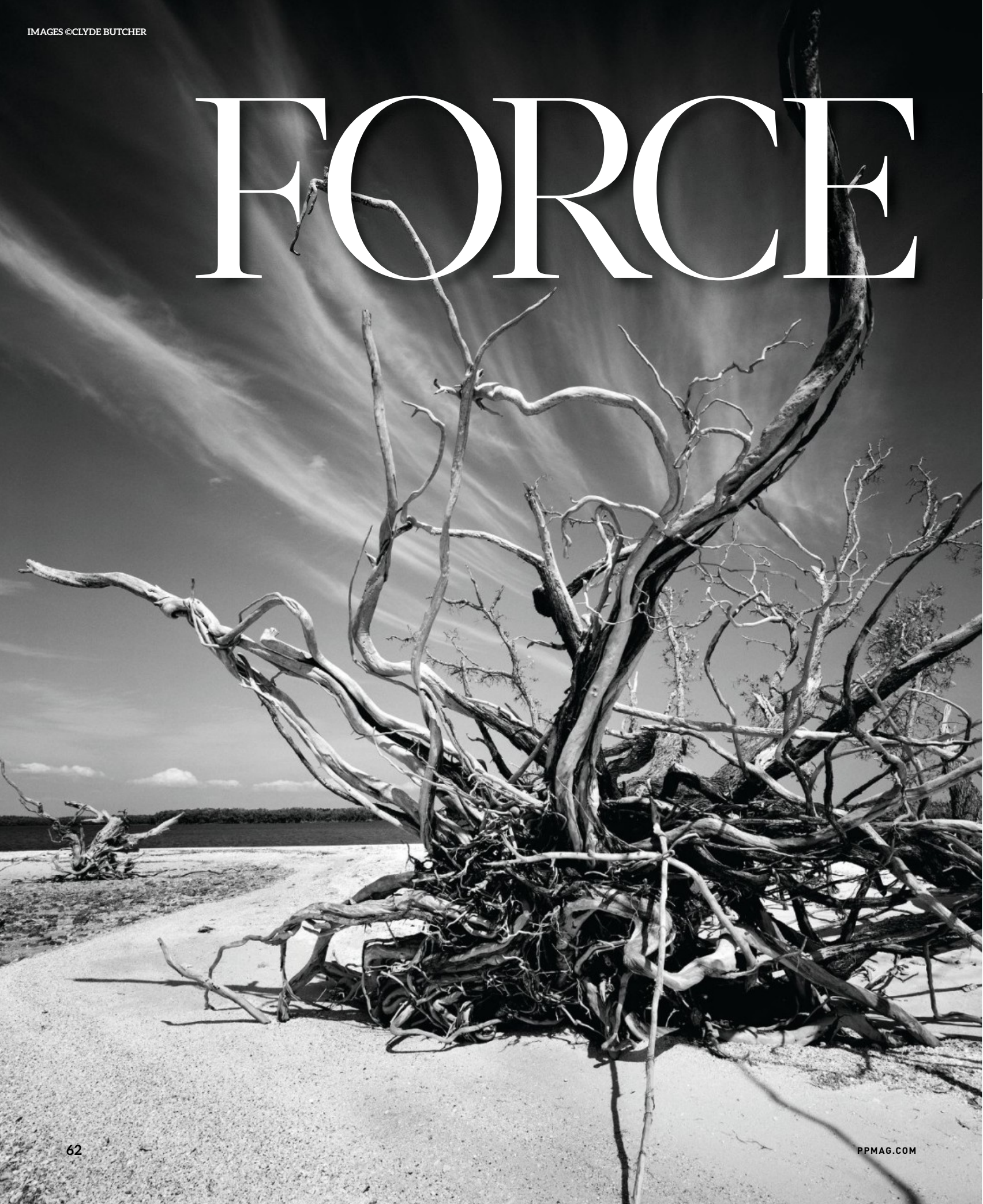

OF LIFE

Clyde Butcher harnesses the vitality of the Everglades

BY ROBERT KIENER

For someone who's standing waist-deep in swamp water in the middle of Florida's Everglades National Park, home to alligators, snakes and God-knows-what-else, Clyde Butcher seems supremely content. As he plants his tripod into the murky water and unloads his trusty, often-repaired and rebuilt vintage 8x10 Deardorff view camera from his battered backpack, he explains, "The swamp is an amazing life force; it's always growing, creeping, crawling. I don't think there's any place like this in the world."

Butcher, who's been exploring and photographing the Everglades and what he often calls "hidden Florida" since the mid-1980s, has earned an international following and reputation

as one of America's foremost landscape photographers. He's won a slew of photography and conservation awards from groups as varied as the North American Nature Photography Association (Lifetime Achievement Award) to the Sierra Club (Ansel Adams Award). His work has been featured in several books and been exhibited around the world.

PBS described his work as "stunning"; ABC News named him "Person of the Week" and called him "one of America's best-known nature photographers." His much-admired, sought-after body of large-format black-and-white landscape photography has earned him the title "the Ansel Adams of the Everglades." Butcher's limited-edition silver gelatin archival prints sell for $450 to $45,000 from his two Florida-based galleries and his website.

GREAT COMMUNICATOR

Despite his success and all the accolades, Butcher, 72, admits he'd rather be known as a communicator than an artist. "I'm flattered that some people call me an artist, but what I really want to do with my pictures is communicate nature to people," Butcher tells me at his Venice, Florida, studio and gallery. "I want my work to inspire people to really look at nature and feel the emotion I felt when I was in the field."

His hazel eyes light up as he shows off a massive 51x87-inch silver gelatin, black-and-white print of a hauntingly beautiful Everglades scene. "Here's a good example of why I shoot in black-and-white," says Butcher as he has me stand in front of the huge print. "Color is a duplication of nature. My black-and-white work is an interpretation." He explains that black-and-white photography gives all the elements of nature—sky, clouds, water, flowers, trees—the same importance. "Black-and-white brings a oneness to the photograph; everything has the same value."

"And there's a reason I make my prints so large," he adds as he gestures to the Everglades print. "I do that so you can't see them." Before I can ask Butcher what he means, he explains, "Because of the size, your eyes have to scan the picture so you can see it like you would in nature; that

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REBIRTH

Butcher didn't always shoot in black-and-white. After studying architecture at California Polytechnic State University and working for an architecture firm, he turned to photography in the 1970s and built up a successful business selling color photographs as wall décor to stores such as Sears, J.C. Penney, and Montgomery Ward. He sold the business and moved to Florida in 1979, where he began selling color photographs of the American West, mostly at street fairs and arts festivals. "People wanted color, and I gave them color," he explains.

Then tragedy struck and forever changed the photographer's life. "My 17-year-old son, Ted, was killed by a reckless driver on June 15, 1986," he says. It was Father's Day, and it marked a dramatic turning point in Butcher's personal and professional life. Lost in grief, he admits, "Nothing made any sense any more." Including his photography.

A few weeks after Ted died, Butcher and his wife, Niki, loaded up their van and drove to Michigan for yet another art show to sell scenic color photographs. "But my heart wasn't in it anymore," he says. As he once wrote, "I asked myself where was the beauty in a world where my son could die so senselessly."

When the show ended he looked at the half-dozen black-and-white photographs of the Everglades he'd captured, the "art shots" that hung at the back of his stand and rarely sold, and had an inspiration. "I knew then what I had to do," he remembers.

A week later, back in Florida, Butcher loaded up his entire inventory of 400,000 color prints, the same prints he'd been selling to support his family, and took them to the Fort Myers dump. "I watched a bulldozer crush them all to bits," says Butcher. "It was time to start over."

He bought a bulky 8x10 Deardorff camera and some used lenses, which he lugged into the Everglades near his home at Big Cypress, with a friend lending a hand. "I told him that these pictures were going to be different," he says. "When he asked how they would be different, I told him I wasn't sure. I just knew I was supposed to do this."

When Butcher came across a scene of the late afternoon moon rising over cypress trees in the distance, he felt he had the shot he'd come for. He unpacked the camera and mounted it atop a tripod. When he spotted a single cloud drifting into the scene he waited then released the camera's shutter at the right moment. But it was jammed. He wedged the shutter open, put another film slide in front of the lens, and held it there for a few seconds. The result, "Moonrise," is still Butcher's favorite picture. "It's been almost 30 years and I've been trying to capture a moon shot with that same magic," confesses Butcher. "The picture was a testament to my son."

With the success of "Moonrise," which sold widely, and other black-and-white landscapes, Butcher never looked back. He's continued exploring and shooting Florida's Everglades and other seldom-visited, seemingly untouched swamps. He's also gone farther afield to Montana, Cuba, the Rocky Mountains, and elsewhere.

"When I was taking color scenic shots I used to calculate how many prints I could sell," he remembers. "After Ted died I didn't care whether or not people would buy these new black-and-white pictures. Life is too short not to do what you want to do." He hasn't make a color photo since.

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WAIT FOR IT

Butcher's work is a family affair. His wife, Niki, accompanies him on his frequent photo expeditions, carrying film holders in her own backpack, and their daughter Jackie helps manage the business and runs a second gallery in the heart of the Everglades that also offers swamp walks to tourists. Butcher maintains several traveling exhibitions of his work that he makes available to galleries and museums. He prefers to self-publish his books and sell prints directly to the public so he can maintain artistic control of his work.

To produce his mural-sized, limited-edition prints, Butcher works out of a 2,200-square-foot darkroom at his Venice studio. As he takes me into the long darkroom he points out the 4x5-foot developing trays that run down the center. "When we are developing large prints I stand on one side of the sink while my assistant Neal stands on the other to process them. It can take an hour and a half to produce one print." Butcher confesses that he likes the developing process. "There's so much creativity in dodging and burning," he explains. To make the large prints, he uses a 24x36-inch copy camera that he converted into an enlarger.

Although Butcher admits to experimenting with digital cameras, he's still concerned about the lifespan of digital images. "We have a good idea of how long silver will last; the jury is still out on digital," he explains. "That's why collectors still prefer silver."

If there's one quality that photographers need, it's patience, says Butcher. He shows me a gorgeous picture of a beach in Cape San Blas, in Florida's Panhandle, that he took in 1983. "Niki and I were there from sunrise to sunset for five days waiting for just the right combination of the storm and light on the beach. In all that time I only took two sheets of film with my Deardorff 5x7." That's the thing about film, he says, it teaches you how to see.

As he shows me a striking, 60-inch panoramic photograph he took of his wife on location in Montana, which he shot with his iPhone 4, he says, "I like to show this to people to show what is possible. It's not the camera; it's the eye that makes the photographer." His legions of fans would no doubt agree. •

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Robert Kiener *is a writer based in Vermont.*

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Q&A

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Q: HOW CAN A WEBSITE INCREASE PHOTOGRAPHY SALES?

A: Most photographers focus 100 percent on client referrals—and for good reason. Happy customers bring in more happy customers. But what most photographers don't understand is that your website is the first place a potential client goes before they call you. So a poor website can sink a great referral. And a great website can accelerate the buying process.

Q: WHAT ELEMENTS OF A PHOTOGRAPHER'S PORTFOLIO WEBSITE ATTRACT AND IMPRESS CLIENTS?

A: Think about the websites you love going to every day. Something about the site delights you, even if you don't understand why. A professional web designer knows how to tie together colors, words, and layouts to create that magical feeling.

It's ironic that professional photographers compete against amateur shooters every day then go home and try to be their own Web designer. At PhotoBiz we create plug-and-play websites any photographer can buy and customize. We also offer design services for anyone who needs a unique look. That's why so many high-profile PPA members are switching to PhotoBiz.

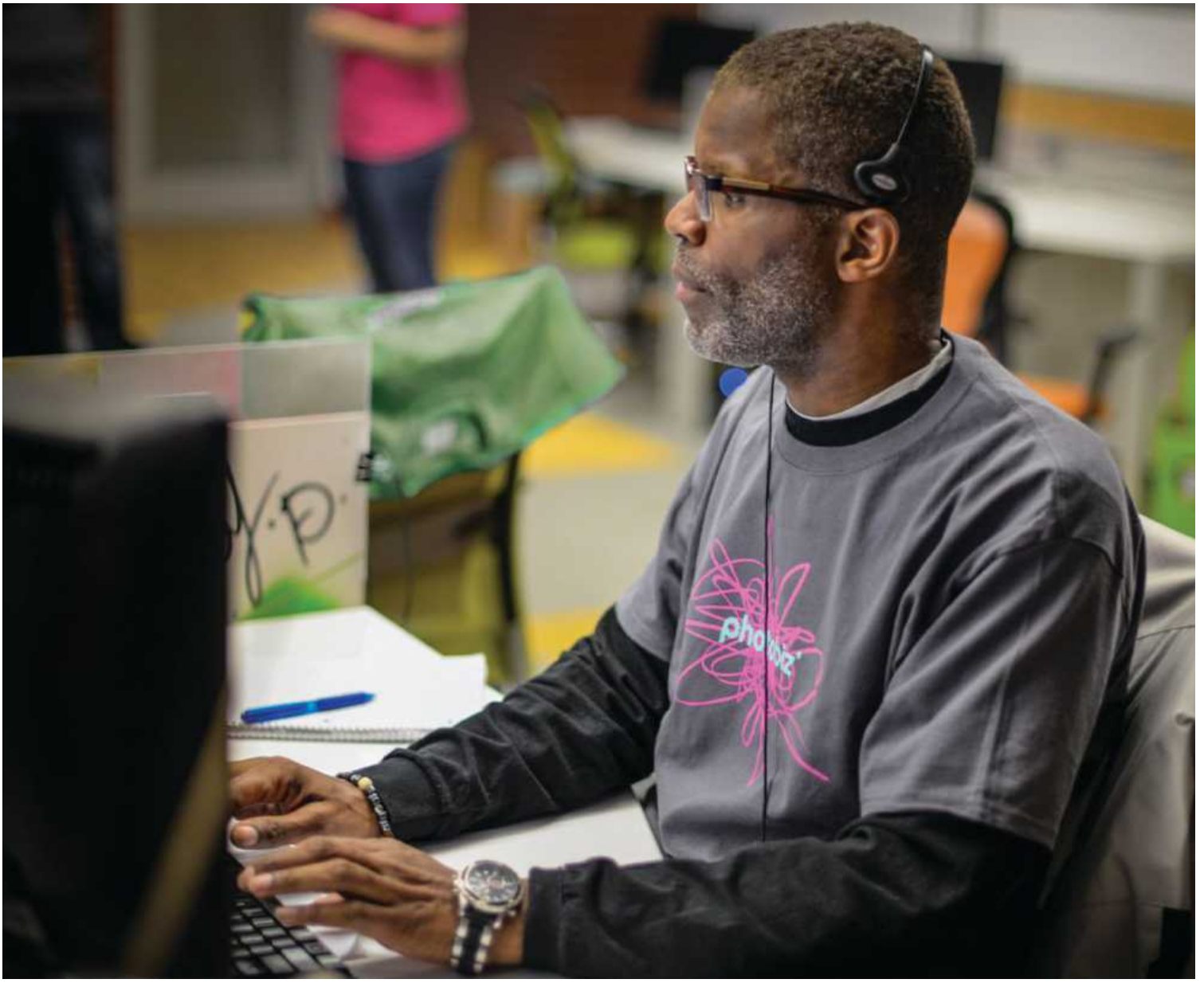
Q: WHICH WELL-KNOWN PPA MEMBERS USE PHOTOBIZ?

A: People like Melanie Anderson, Mike and Suzy Fulton, Dan Frievalt, Carl Caylor, and many others. We're honored that they trust us with their business and personal brands. They focus on their craft and clients; we focus on giving them a super fast website that looks great on mobile phones and laptops.

Now people are also raving about our SEO services. We're proving that you don't have to rely on complicated tricks or scammy tactics to rank No. 1 in Google.

Q: HOW CAN A PHOTOGRAPHER BOOST THEIR SEO?

A: SEO traditionally stands for "search engine optimization." But we've found it's more important to focus on the other SEO: "site engagement optimization." What's the point of ranking in Google or Bing if people are landing on your site and running away?



It all goes back to two things. First, you have to charm your clients with a fantastic website. If it reflects your personality and tells your story, you'll close more sales. Second, don't waste time trying to become a website expert. You should either use a professional platform or a professional service, like the ones we offer at PhotoBiz.

Q: IS PHOTOBIZ A WEBSITE BUILDER TOOL OR A WEBSITE DESIGN SERVICE?

A: Both. It comes down to what you need from a website partner. Are you just beginning and need a DIY system that will get you up and running quickly? We have the tools, plus a team of people, ready to take your call. Or maybe you're ready to graduate because you don't have the time to do it yourself anymore. We have a suite of services that will take your vision and deliver a website that wows your clients.

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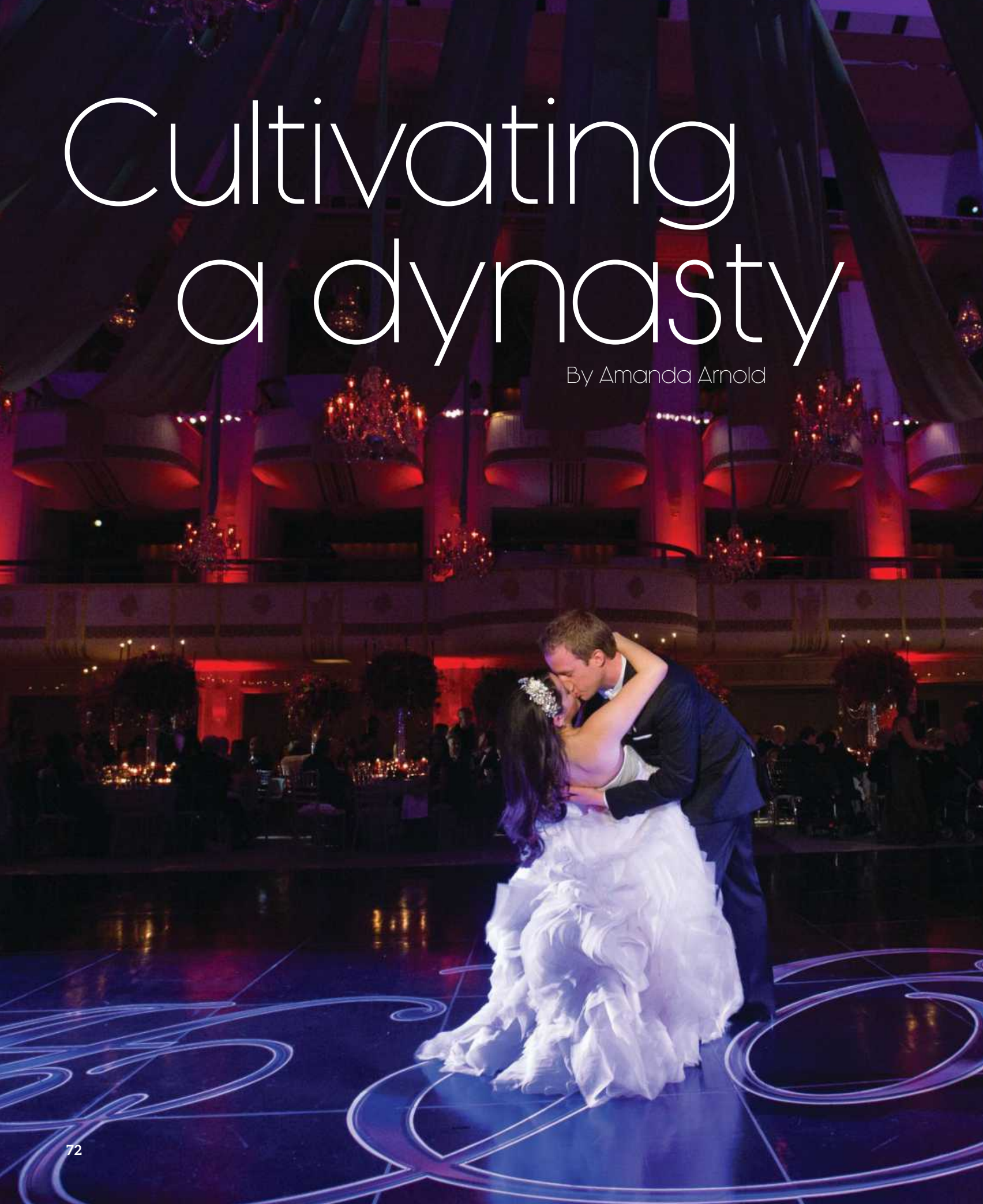

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How family businesses benefit from multi-generational insight and leadership

Fred Marcus was a Holocaust survivor. He escaped Germany for Cuba, where he lived for nearly two years, teaching himself photography by taking pictures of immigrant families on Cuban beaches and developing the film at night in his bathtub. In the early 1940s, he received the green light to emigrate to the United States, where he set up Fred Marcus Photography in a basement on West 72nd Street in Manhattan. He began making portraits and photographing events, often for the same families he'd first met in Cuba.

Fred Marcus Photography staff (clockwise, from top left): Felix Feygin, Stephen Pellegrino, Brian Marcus, Tara Shillingford, Carla Schauffler, Leslie Farinacci, Andy Marcus, Holly Haffner, Juan Cespedes and Frida Caceres.

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Romaguera Photography family staff (standing, from top left): Roch Eshleman, Ralph Romaguera Jr., Ryan Romaguera, (seated) Cindy Romaguera and Ralph Romaguera Sr.

The story is told by Brian Marcus, Cr.Photog., grandson of Fred Marcus, and it's quite a legacy to uphold. Fred passed away in 2001, and Brian and his father, Andy Marcus, M.Photog.Cr., are now partners at the helm of Fred Marcus Photography, which occupies three floors in that same 72nd Street building on the Upper West Side. Andy has led the studio for nearly 40 years, and Brian joined him 15 years ago after a four-year stint in Los Angeles doing film production. None of the Marcus men went to photography school, and both Brian and his father began assisting on shoots when they were in high school. "I was never pressured to be a photographer," Brian says. "It was just in my DNA."

MAINTAINING THE EDGE

You might think joining the family photography business would be an easy way to enter the field, and it does have its benefits, Brian says. "I'm definitely lucky to have had the history and the background that I have had." But he adds, "I've also had to earn my position throughout the years—to be leading the

IMAGES ©FRED MARCUS PHOTOGRAPHY

company into the next generation."

Brian compares Fred Marcus Photography, which photographs the weddings and events of some of New York's wealthiest, to the Waldorf Astoria hotel: Guests expect a high level of quality and customer service when they check into the Waldorf, and clients expect the same of Fred Marcus. Brian estimates that as many as a thousand of the studio's customers are descendants of families Fred first photographed decades ago. "They will say, 'Your grandfather did my father's wedding,' or 'Your dad did my bat mitzvah,'" Brian says. "Maintaining that reputation that is really the driving force is the difficult part of running a business that's been around for so long. It's not as easy as you might think. I mean, that brand and name have obviously been fantastic for me. But evolving and breaking into the next decade—it's really an amazing challenge. But it's something I truly personally enjoy—to continuously rebrand and impress year after year."

The secret is to maintain the hallmark values that have defined the brand—consistency and unparalleled quality and customer service—while keeping pace with the latest trends in aesthetics, style, marketing, and technology. Brian recalls his elderly grandfather attending weddings to shake hands with clients long after he was physically able to handle the photography work. That hands-on, highly personalized approach to customer service is maintained by Brian and Andy, who say they make themselves available to clients 24 hours a day. Even though they have a staff of 12, "There is never a phone call that we aren't going to take. And we are extremely hands on," says Brian. That means no sales people, no outsourcing of post-production, printing, or album design, and developing lasting friendships with clients. "We are definitely doing 90 percent of the work," he says. "There is nothing that gets by without me or my dad touching it."

At the same time, hard decisions have to be made about what to modernize and what to retire. During his tenure, Brian has worked to bring the Fred Marcus website, social media, and branding up to date. "Before I came onto the business a lot of people knew about Fred Marcus studio, but I don't think they knew about it because of our personalities," he says. He revamped the website to give potential clients a taste of "who

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The Peters family (clockwise, from bottom left): Hayden Conley, Mark Elliott, Austin Conley, Karen Peters, Larry Peters, Tanner Killian, Brian Killian, Chase Killian, Janine Peters-Killian, Madison Killian, Gavin Elliott, and Melinda Peters Elliott

we are, and not just what we do," and it's tweaked daily to keep it fresh.

He overhauled the Fred Marcus Photography logo after more than 70 years, which was particularly difficult because the original was his grandfather's signature. "You have to make these hard decisions to update the brand and modernize it," Brian notes.

Allowing updates can be difficult for the older generation in a family photography studio, but change is a necessary part of business. "You have to be accepting to change, and that is one of the hardest things to do in life," Brian says. Communication has been key between him and his father. You have be aware of the changes in your field and "use the younger generation to step in and really solidify that change with new ideas," Brian says. "Communicate together, hold on to some stuff from the past, but be smart enough not to hold on too tight so that you're not adapting to new things."

IN WITH THE NEW

Ralph Romaguera Sr., M.Photog.Hon.M.Photog.Cr., CPP, API, F-ASP, founder of Romaguera Photography in Metairie, Louisiana, agrees that allowing the younger generation power within a multi-generational studio is paramount to keeping everyone congenial and ideas fresh. "What I suggest to other dads and moms who are working with their kids is to let the kids be a part of the business. Let the kids be a part of the decision making. When dad or mom keep their hands in it too long, where it's their way or no way, that is the wrong way."

At Romaguera Photography, "everybody does everything, but everybody has a special task," Romaguera explains. Son Ralph Romaguera Jr., M.Photog.Cr., CPP, does event photography; son Ryan Romaguera, M.Photog.Cr., CPP, runs the studio; and son-in-law Roch Eshleman, Cr.Photog., manages the business. Meanwhile, wife Cindy Romaguera, M.Photog.Cr., focuses on production work. "The three boys do 99.9 percent of the work, and we have a wonderful staff," says Ralph. "Besides the four of us, there are 17 other people."

Ralph attributes much of the continued success of his studio to his sons' drive and innovation. "When it was just me in the beginning, we were wedding photographers, and then it grew to school photography. With the boys it grew to more schools and sports and yearbooks and all kinds of opportunities that a photographer, if he pursues them, can really still make a great living at. We are growing 25 percent next year, and we already have a very nice business. It's be-

IMAGES ©ROMAGUERA PHOTOGRAPHY

cause of their enthusiasm and their interest in expanding. The business has really grown because of their ambitions."

CONNECTING WITH A YOUNGER MARKET

"I always say I should have had more children so I could have a lot of good employees," says Karen Peters, Cr.Photog., of Peters Photography in London, Ohio. Her husband, Larry Peters, M.Photog.MEI.Cr., CPP, launched the studio in the 1970s and found success taking unique portraits of high school seniors, growing from 200 to 700 clients in one year. In 1990, they hired photographer Brian Killian, M.Photog.Cr. Brian hit it off with the Peters' daughter Janine, who after attending photography school married him and became Janine Peters-Killian, M.Photog.Cr. Brian and Larry are the studio's lead pho-

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tographers; Janine handles child photography.

But the family labor doesn't stop at the second generation: "All of our grandchildren help," Karen says. Because Peters Photography focuses on high school senior portraits, the grandchildren's insights have been invaluable in connecting with the studio's target market. "There are things that we would not be up on that we have to listen to and say, OK, we need to do something like that," she says. Grandson Chase occasionally blogs for the studio and provides advice about what and how often to post on Instagram. It can be hard to keep up with where the kids are on social media and how to reach them, so that kind of firsthand knowledge is gold, according to Karen.

IN THIS TOGETHER

One of the most appealing aspects about a family business is that it doesn't die with one generation. The Peters' estate calls for the business to be handed down to their family, and the Romagueras' states that the business will be handed down to all three sons, each owning an equal share.

In the meantime, it's a comfort to know that your workers are emotionally and financially invested in your business. "It's their future, it's the future of the family, and it's the future of the family business," says Karen Peters. "They're not just an employee." •

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2 Einstein™ E640s	Full Power	1280 Ws	3.5 sec.	8.86 sec.	10.13 sec.
3 Einstein™ E640s	Full Power	1920 Ws	5.3 sec.	13.0 sec.	15.8 sec.
4 Einstein™ E640s	Full Power	2560 Ws	7.2 sec.	15.9 sec.	19.2 sec.
4 Einstein™ E640s	Half Power	1280 Ws	3.3 sec.		
1 AlienBees™ B1600	Full Power	640 Ws	2.0 sec.	4.13 sec.	4.4 sec.
2 AlienBees™ B1600s 2 AlienBees™ B800s	Full Power	1920 Ws	5.27 sec.	14.1 sec.	14.4 sec.

Flash Unit Models	Output Setting	Total WS	POWERED BY VLX™		
			FPS	Time	# of Shots
1 Einstein™ E640	-4.4f	30 Ws	7fps	2.4 sec.	17 shots
4 Einstein™ E640s	-6f	40 Ws	7fps	2.33 sec.	17 shots

Complete VLX™ in Cool Grey
6 lbs. total / 120VAC only

ABOUT THE BATTERY: Most other systems use the cheaper, NMC-style Lithium Battery. Its limitations are typical storage life of 2-3 years and about 250 charge / recharge cycles before depletion.

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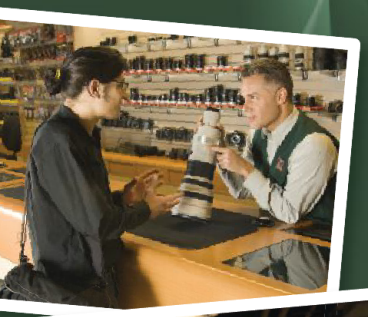

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16 Mega Pixels

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18 Mega Pixels

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20 Mega Pixels

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20 Mega Pixels

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16 Mega Pixels

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20 Mega Pixels

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22 Mega Pixels

Canon EOS-1Dx D-SLR

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18 Mega Pixels

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- Focus 1.6' to Infinity
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*Kit with 16-50mm OSS Lens #SOA6000** 24 Mega Pixels

SONY Alpha A7II Mirrorless System Camera

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- Full HD XAVC S Video & S-Log2 Gamma

Body Only *#SOA72*
Kit with 28-70mm OSS Lens *#SOA72K* 24 Mega Pixels

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- EXPEED 4 Image Processor • Full HD 1080p Video Recording • 3.0" LCD • 5 fps Shooting
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- SD/SDHC/SDXC Card Slot
- Available in Black, Grey or Red
- Nikon Inc. limited warranty included

Kit with 18-55mm VR II *#NID33001855**.....**646.95**
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24 Mega Pixels

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24 Mega Pixels

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24 Mega Pixels

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36 Mega Pixels

Nikon D7200 DSLR

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- Accepts Nikon AF Lenses (1.5x factor)
- No Optical Low-Pass Filter • Built-In Wi-Fi
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- Full HD 1080p Video Recording at 60 fps
- Nikon Inc. limited warranty included

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50-135/2.8 ED IF SDM (67ø)	
50-200/4-5.6 ED WR (52ø)	
55-300/4-5.8 ED (58ø)	

SONY

Flash System

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11-18/4.5-5.6 DT (77ø)	**799.99**		
16-80/3.5-4.5 DT Carl Zeiss (62ø)	**999.99**		
16-105/3.5-5.6 DT (62ø)	**699.99**		
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- Zoom Head (24-105)
- Bounce & Swivel Head
- Update via USB Port
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SUNPAK 622 Super Pro TTL Handle Mount Flash

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- TTL with appropriate module
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#SU622S* **179.95**

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- Built-In FreeXwire
- Radio Wireless TTL
- High Speed Sync
- USB Port • TTL compatible

#QUQF8* **875.00**

Vivitar 285HV Professional Auto Shoe Mount Flash

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- Automatic exposure range to 70'
- 4 auto f/stop settings
- Removable sensor
- Bounce Head
- Zoom Head (28-105) • Weight 14.9 oz

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MIRRORED *grace*

By Stephanie Boozer

Megan DiPiero shows clients their own beauty

Before and after

IMAGES ©MEGAN DiPIERO

Beauty: Its interpretation is as diverse as we are. Yet despite our theoretical agreement that beauty is in the eye of the beholder, "standards" have emerged. Created and perpetuated across all forms of media in America, these standards are often defined in the most superficial terms. The billion-dollar vanity industry seeks to fix what it wishes us to believe are flaws but with the subversive side effect of cultivating an inferiority complex about our physical appearance.

For many people what results is a vicious cycle of aspiration, failed hopes, and negative self-talk. Megan DiPiero is one photographer who's actively seeking to break that circle of distress that's claimed the psyche of many

Clients before their sessions (above) and after (left and right)

women and men. In fact, DiPiero has built a successful and soul-gratifying business around beauty photography in Fort Meyers, Florida. Forget old-school notions of mall-based glamour photo studios. DiPiero doesn't aim to shoehorn clients into a preconceived set of constraints; instead, she seeks to amplify the individual characteristics of each subject. Rather than try to make clients conform to a social standard, she wants to show them how beautiful they already are.

DiPiero's quest is to make real women feel as beautiful as what they perceive in popular media without trying to make them appear that way. "I've always looked at my friends and thought they were so beautiful, but the way they talk about themselves, it's a complete mismatch. I thought if I could get them in front of my camera and convince them of how other people see them, it would be such a gift to me and to my clients. I want them to really see themselves and recognize the beauty that was always there."

DiPiero started her business in 2010, photographing primarily families and portraits. She quickly joined PPA and followed her peers' strong urging to enter images in the International Photographic Competition. Not believing her existing family photography was yet up to competition standards, DiPiero began putting together concept shoots that forced her to take charge of lighting and compose images with a competition mindset. She focused on getting more technical education, which organically pushed her to expand beyond families and children.

"I found I was falling in love with the idea of controlling light, just like I fell in love with photography when I was first photographing my infant son," says DiPiero. It wasn't long before DiPiero discovered Australian

photographer Sue Bryce, who specializes in beauty photography, and realized the potential right in her own community. She immediately set to work on her portfolio and was quickly buoyed by clients' responses. "I had one in those early months that was crying while looking at her images because she didn't know she was so beautiful."

That was two years ago, and today, DiPiero's beauty and headshot business accounts for more than family portraiture, which is just fine with her. Beauty photography has become not only an outlet to challenge societal dictates about what is considered beautiful, it's also a way for DiPiero to help women overcome the pressures of those dictates. Though it's a business, it genuinely warms her heart to watch clients transform in front of her lens.

"A woman's beauty is in her expression," she says. "If you look at mass media, you'd think it's all about the waist, the breasts, or the hips, but it's not. If you show a woman the beauty in her eyes and expression, she'll fall in love with herself."

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Helping women get past their apprehensions is a top focus for DiPiero, and it begins at the first contact, when she asks each client how she dreams of being photographed. Understanding their vision helps DiPiero uncover their insecurities and strengths. She starts with an in-person style and concept consultation, happily walking through closets and selecting clothing with each client. Often what looks good in person doesn't photograph well, so DiPiero helps clients understand what works, what doesn't, and why—things she learned well from her own experience in front of a beauty photographer's camera.

"I chose my clothes 10 minutes before the shoot because I'd procrastinated, did my nails the night before and my hair late that morning," she says. "It was so bad. I showed up and felt so panicky. Giving them that pro consult makes them feel confident, which is a great place to start, and keeps them from feeling frenzied and frazzled."

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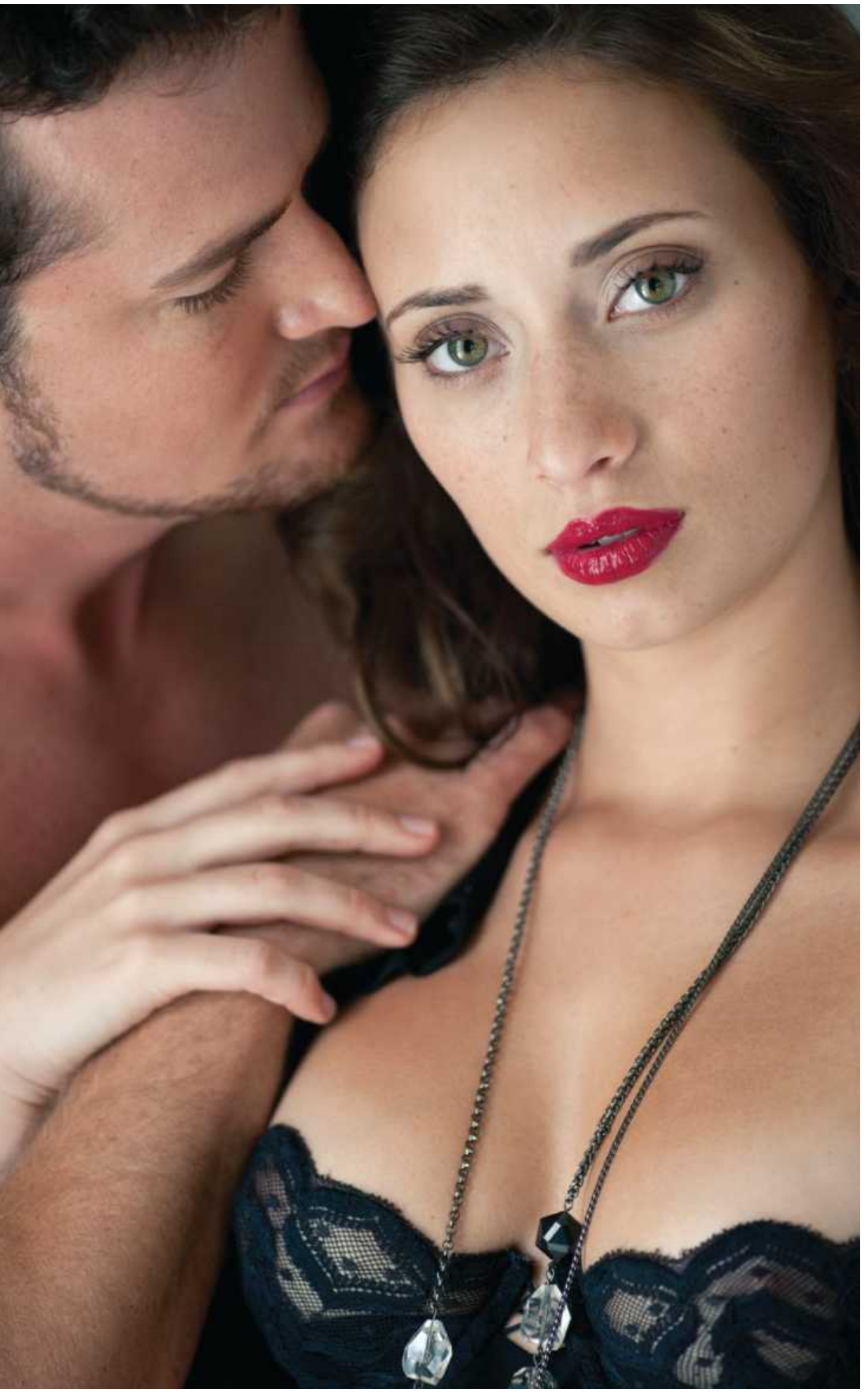

On the day of the shoot, hair and makeup are provided at the studio, but DiPiero notices a little nervous anxiety creeps back in her subjects once the camera comes out. With some positive banter and reassurance, DiPiero coaxes back the confidence and by the last clothing change, she says, magic is in the air.

"I love that the session starts with handshakes and ends with hugs," she says. She aims to unveil the images to clients within a week to reduce the anxiety that can build if they have to wait too long. "They're usually blown away," says DiPiero. The most important thing to her is that they don't believe the magic comes from the photographer but from their own beauty. "I'm just bringing out their best. They blossom when I follow this process."

When it comes to the end product, DiPiero says that, unlike family and child photography clients, most beauty subjects aren't comfortable ordering large wall portraits. Instead, she finds 5x7-inch prints in 8x10 mats are the most popular. She's also experimenting with offering slightly larger 6x9 and 8x12 prints in elaborate, layered presentations with deckled edging, fillet, and matting that conveys luxury without appearing overwhelmingly large. "My whole world has always been about printing big. But these smaller prints are better enjoyed in a more intimate way. You have to walk up to a small portrait to experience it—so much different than a large wall print."

She's also steering beauty clients toward gorgeous albums, which helps boost her sales average (usually about $3,600 a session, which is impressive for the beauty market). But though beauty photography has proven to be a lucrative market for DiPiero, she says that helping other people find their confidence is what boosts her own.

"I've been so critical of my body my whole life," she says. "I've struggled with the same things these other women struggle with. But when my clients make that switch from disbelief to *Wait, is that me?* my own self-esteem goes up. I love the evolution of watching a woman come to know herself." •

megandipiero.com

Stephanie Boozer *is a writer in Charleston, South Carolina.*

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

RETURNING TO MY ROOTS

by Michael Timmons, M.Photog.M.Artist.Cr., CPP, F-ASP

▸ What a great time to be a photographer. There are so many opportunities to make money in this industry. I hope you're taking advantage of all that PPA membership offers. Whether you're reinventing your business or brushing up on photographic techniques, there are many educational opportunities on PPAedu for you to use. You can learn from industry leaders and mentors who are truly the innovators and the successes of our industry. And don't forget that PhotoVision's entire library is available to you on ppa.com by live streaming.

This month is the International Photographic Competition. Thousands of images from around the world will be evaluated by jurors Aug. 3-6. It's a long and enjoyable effort. Don't forget that if you can't come to Atlanta to see the judging in person, you can watch the competition live on ppa.com. If you didn't enter IPC this year, I encourage you to start preparing for 2016. This is one of the most important educational experiences you can get in professional photography. Again and again I hear from photographers who tell me how much they learned from their IPC experience and how they improved their work as a result. And if that's not enough, for a nominal fee you can have your competition images critiqued at IPC. This gives you the benefit of getting advice from an approved juror so you can more readily improve your photography and earn merits toward a PPA photographic degree.

You can also take advantage of mentoring from an approved juror at Imaging USA 2016 in Atlanta in January. There, you'll get one-on-one assistance and also be able to see this year's IPC award-winning images.

Last month I had the pleasure of returning to my roots in Arkansas. The Arkansas Professional Photographers Association was the first affiliate I joined nearly 32 years ago. It's where my professional photography journey began. There's a lot to be said for local and state affiliate participation. The lifelong friendships you make are one benefit that many people haven't yet experienced, but don't let that opportunity get away from you. I know I can always call one of these friends to help me if I have a question, problem, or need.

I'm still thankful to the members of APPA for being there to mentor and nourish me when I first started out. While there are many people I learned from, there are a few I would like to mention. Gary Meek, M.Photog.Cr., CPP, API, A-ASP,EA-ASP, and Kathy Meek, M.Photog.Cr., CPP, API, are still teaching and mentoring photographers working toward their CPP designation, for example. And I'd be remiss if I didn't thank Jim Cunningham, M.Photog.Cr.; Gary Alan Strain, M.Photog.Cr.; Frank Washburn, M.Photog.Cr.; and of course Tom McDonald, M.Photog.Cr., API; and Jo Alice McDonald, M.Photog.Cr., who helped me tremendously as I was starting out. •

BUSINESS RENOVATION

TWO STUDIOS GETTING A FULL BUSINESS MAKEOVER

▸ Two PPA photographers are getting well-deserved assistance with a full studio makeover by a team of mentors who will direct attention to every facet of their business. Using data from the PPA Benchmark Survey, mentors will investigate and improve each studio's business model, branding, pricing, marketing, sales strategy, workflow efficiency, and profitability. Members Wes Roberts and Krista Newbill are the recipients of the makeovers.

"PPA is providing these makeovers to give photographers real-life accounts of how to be more profitable and to give studio owners takeaways they can use in their business," says PPA Director of Education Angela Kurkian, M.Photog.Cr., CPP. "It's an all-encompassing approach looking at sales, marketing, workflow, and finances to see if the participants are set up to realistically reach their financial goals. PPA's team of mentors will work with them individually on a monthly basis to help them reach their goals."

The team of mentors is an accomplished group of well-established and successful pros who will coach participants through their toughest business challenges. The team includes mentors covering six specialties:

- Marketing: Mary Fisk-Taylor, M.Photog. Cr., CPP, ABI, API
- Sales: Kristin Privette
- Design: Ashley Brooke Chambers
- Operations: Gregory Daniel, M.Photog. Cr., CPP, F-ASP
- Workflow: Dave Doeppel
- Accounting: Bridget Jackson

Kurkian serves as the coordinator and facilitator for the project.

PARTICIPATING STUDIOS

Wes Roberts is a wedding photographer from Smith Stations, Alabama. He started his photography journey as a part-timer and transitioned to operating a studio full-time five years ago. In 2014, 95 percent of his income came from weddings. In 2015, he wants to transition to 64 percent weddings, 30 percent high school seniors, and 6 percent personal and miscellaneous projects. Seniors are a new product line in his mix.

The makeover of Wes Roberts Photography will involve all aspects of the studio transition. Roberts says he's looking forward to working with PPA mentors to create a detailed marketing plan that includes strategic partnerships to expand his presence in the wedding market and create a niche within the senior market. He also wants to improve his workflow and implement some automation to be able to spend more time with his family and eventually become the sole wage earner. His long-term vision is to run a sustainable and profitable business that he'll be proud to pass down to his children.

> *"PPA is providing these makeovers to give photographers real-life accounts of how to be more profitable and to give studio owners actual takeaways they can use in their own businesses."*
>
> *PPA Director of Education Angela Kurkian*

©WES ROBERTS

Wes Roberts of Wes Roberts Photography studio in Smith Stations, Alabama

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Krista Newbill of Krista Lee Photography studio in Murfreesboro, Tennessee

The second studio makeover recipient is Krista Newbill. From her Krista Lee Photography studio in Murfreesboro, Tennessee, she photographs weddings, family and child portraits, and some commercial work. She's ready to shift her strategy from selling image files only to a product-based price list. Newbill's ultimate goal is to increase session prices, develop product sales, and boost her overall net profit while working fewer hours.

In business for 11 years, Newbill has been incrementally increasing her rates for the past seven years. With the help of PPA mentors and Benchmark Survey data, she's looking to improve her sales strategy and streamline turnaround times. One of her goals is to increase the value of her photography services. Mentors indicate that these changes will likely necessitate a redesign of her website, new marketing material, and an overall branding makeover.

MAKING PROGRESS

The PPA blog (ppa.com/ppa-today-blog) will track the progress of these studio makeovers, and full recaps will be presented at Imaging USA 2016 in Atlanta. •

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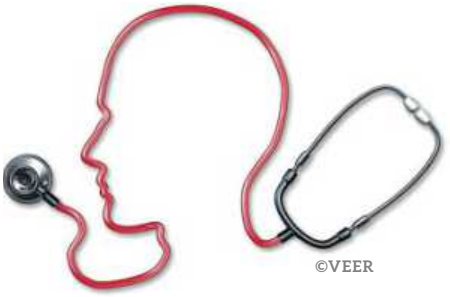

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▸ Call a Doctor Plus, the latest membership benefit from PPA, can save photographers both time and money when they're not feeling well or have health questions. For a modest monthly fee, members can simply pick up the phone or log on to a website to get answers, assistance, and even prescriptions.

Call a Doctor Plus is a health and wellness program that uses technology to provide patients with effective, immediate access to health care goods and services. There are no co-pays, deductibles, or per-call charges.

PPA photographers get all the care they need for an exclusive low monthly subscription of $8.95 per month. The service is typically $19.95 per month.

Call a Doctor Plus provides 24/7 access to certified physicians who can diagnose and prescribe. Prescriptions are sent directly to members' local pharmacies, and records are sent to their primary physician. The benefit covers up to five dependents.

One member who's already used the service gives it a thumbs up. "I requested a consultation online and was called by a doctor within 5 to 10 minutes," she said. "After providing a brief description of my symptoms, I was diagnosed with an acute upper respiratory infection. The doctor sent a prescription to my local pharmacy, and I had the medicine in hand less than an hour after I called."

Read more or enroll at ppa.com/cadr+. •

UPDATE YOUR MERCHANT ACCOUNT

NEW CREDIT CARD TECHNOLOGY WILL REQUIRE YOUR ACTION

▸ Beginning Oct. 1, merchants can be held liable for counterfeit fraud losses when credit cards are used. New chip (contactless) cards aim to improve security against fraud over the current magnetic strip cards, and business owners, including photographers, must have the capability to process chip card transactions to avoid potential liabilities.

WHAT DO YOU NEED TO DO?

It depends on what point-of-sale terminal you currently use. For info, contact PPA's Bank of America Merchant Services at (888)317-5402 or tellmemore@bankofamericamerchant.com.

LIVE STREAMING RETURNS

WATCH IPC JUDGING AS IT HAPPENS

▸ PPA's International Photographic Competition judging will be streamed live this month for a second consecutive year.

"We're excited to offer live streaming so participants and non-participants alike can see the value in viewing the judging process," says Randy McNeilly, M.Photog.MEI.Cr., CPP, API, F-ASP. McNeilly serves as chair of PPA's International Photographic Competition Committee. "Photographers will be able to see what truly goes on during competition judging, and hopefully this will encourage more to enter in the future. Once photographers get over the initial fear of competition, most keep entering year after year and become better photographers in the process."

The competition attracts submissions from all over the world. At IPC, a panel of 50 trained jurors will select the top photographs from more than 5,000 entries.

In 2014, more than 1,800 images were selected for inclusion in PPA's General Collection and 918 (roughly 18 percent) were inducted into PPA's Loan Collection. Loan Collection images, considered to be the best of the best, are published each year in Marathon Press' "Loan Collection" book; more than 200 selected General Collection images are published in the "Showcase" book. Images accepted into the General and Loan Collections at this year's IPC will be displayed at Imaging USA 2016 in Atlanta.

©ANGELA KURKIAN

Photographers who aren't able to travel to Lawrenceville, Georgia, for IPC judging can watch and listen online.

Last year, 1,570 visitors from 13 countries tuned in to watch live streaming of the event over the Internet. Almost half of those observers didn't have images entered in the competition.

This year's live streaming Aug. 3-6 will be accessible on desktop and laptop computers (not mobile devices). PPA photographers will be able to log in and view the judging; nonmembers can register at no cost. watch.stream.theipc.org. •

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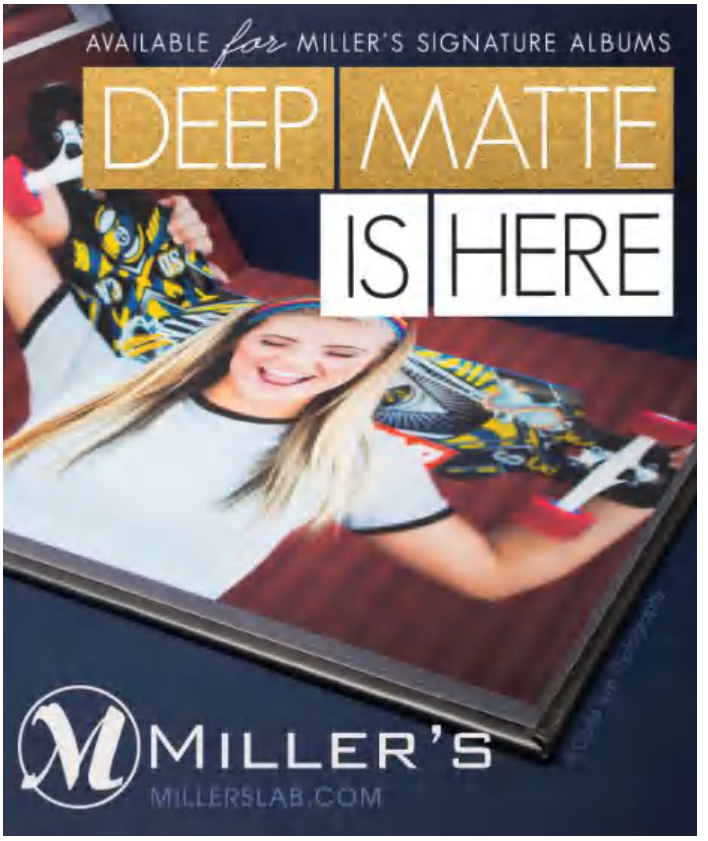

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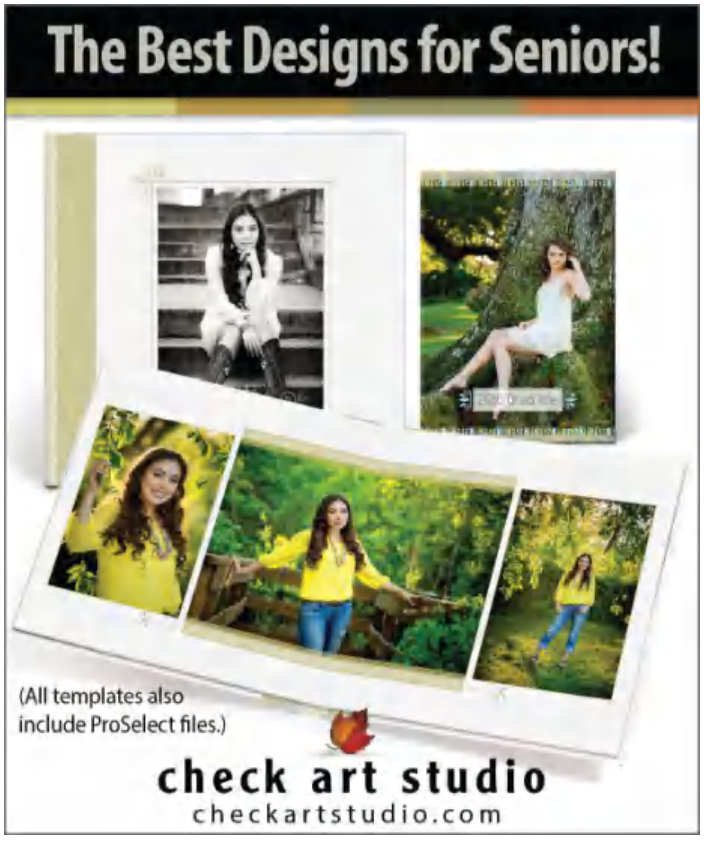
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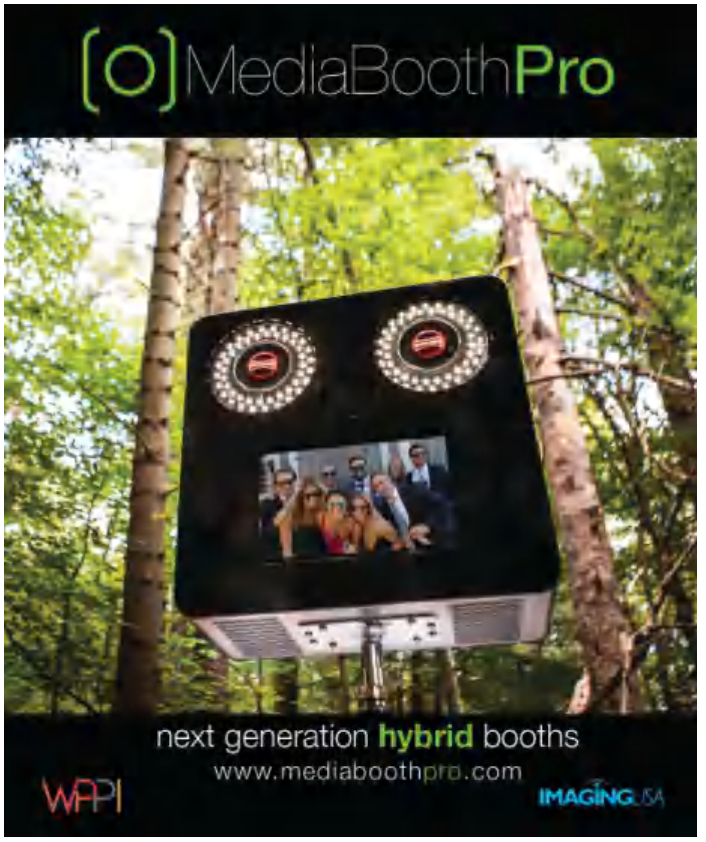

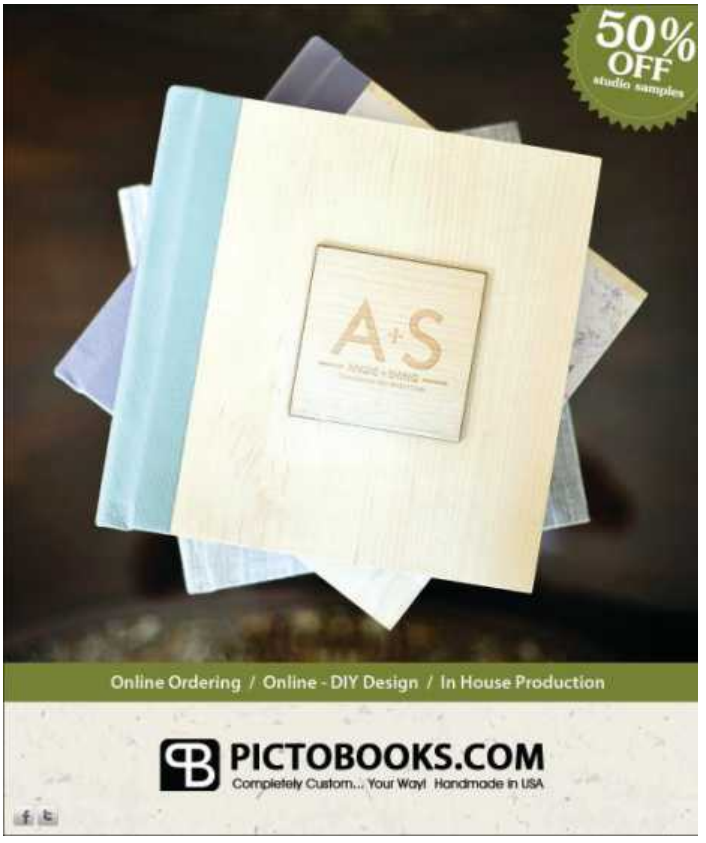

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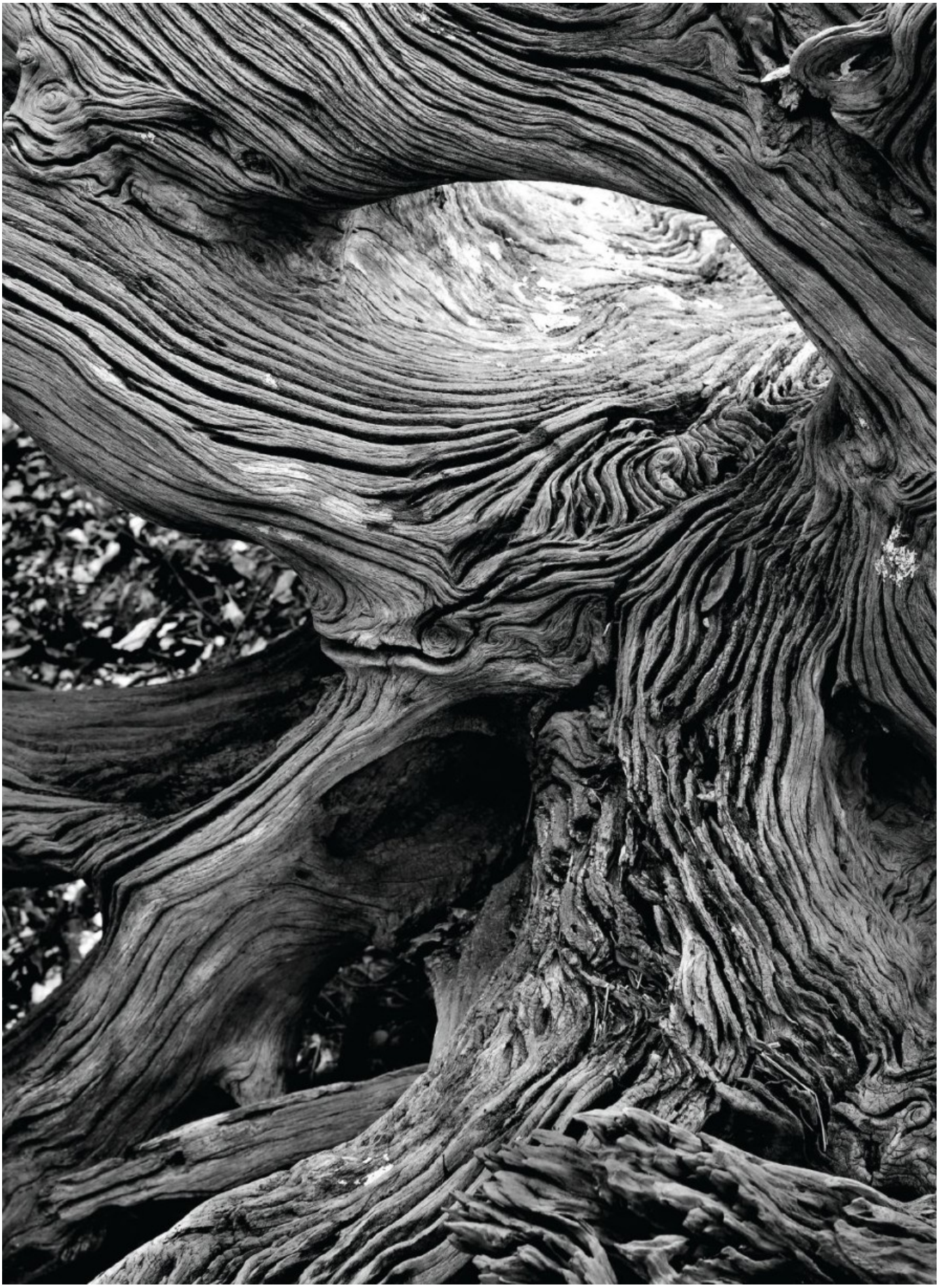

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